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PLATO'S SYMPOSIUM

How Diotima the wise prophetess
Instructed the instructor and why he
Rebuked the infant spirit of melody
On Agathon's sweet lips which as he spoke
Was as the lovely star when morn has broke
The roof of darkness in the golden dawn
Half hidden and yet beautiful

Shelley



Frontispiece by Denis Tegetmeier

PLATO'S SYMPOSIUM

or

THE DRINKING PARTY

in English by

MICHAEL JOYCE

London

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We must try its effect as an English poem, that is the way to judge of the merit of a translation, translations are, in general, for people who cannot read the original

Dr Johnson on Potter's Aeschylus

PLATO'S SYMPOSIUM
OR
THE DRINKING PARTY

Apollodorus and his Friends

Apollodorus Oh, if that's what you want to know, it isn't long since I had occasion to refresh my memory Only the day before yesterday, as I was coming up to the city from my place at Phalerum, a friend of mine caught sight of me from behind, and while I was still a long way ahead he shouted after me Here, I say, Apollodorus! Can't you wait for me? So I stopped and waited for him

Apollodorus, he said as he came up, you're the very man I'm looking for I want to ask you about this party at Agathon's, when Socrates and Alcibiades and the rest of them were at dinner there What were all these speeches they were making about Love? I've heard something about them from a man who'd been talking to Phoenix, but his information was rather sketchy and he said I'd better come to

SYMPOSIUM

you So you'll have to tell me the whole story, for you know we always count on you, Apollodorus, to report your beloved Socrates But before you begin, tell me, were you there yourself?

Well, said I, whoever was your informant I can well believe he wasn't very clear about it if you gathered it was such a recent party that I could have been there!

That was my impression, said he

My dear Glaucon, I protested, how could it have been? Have you forgotten how long Agathon's been away from Athens? And don't you know it's only two or three years since I started spending so much of my time with Socrates, and making it my business to follow everything he says and does from day to day? Because, you know, before that I used to go dashing about all over the place, firmly convinced that I was leading a full and interesting life, when I was really as wretched as could be — much the same as you, for instance, for I know philosophy's the last thing you'd spend your time on

Now don't start girding at me, said Glaucon, but tell me when was this party, then?

It was given, I told him, when you and I were in the nursery, the day after Agathon's celebrations

APOLLODORUS

with the players when he'd won the prize with his first tragedy

Yes, he admitted, that must have been a good many years ago But who told you about it — Socrates himself?

No, no, I said I had it from the same source as Phoenix Aristodemus of Cydathenaeum, a little fellow who used to go about barefoot He was there himself, indeed I fancy he was one of Socrates' most impassioned admirers at the time As a matter of fact I did ask Socrates about one or two points later on, and he confirmed what Aristodemus had told me

Very well, said Glaucon, then you must tell me all about it before we reach the city I'm sure it'll pass the time most agreeably

Well, I told him all about it as we went along, and so, as I was saying, I've got the story pretty pat, and if you want to hear it too I suppose I may as well begin For that matter I don't know anything that gives me greater pleasure, or profit either, than talking or listening to philosophy But when it comes to ordinary conversation, such as the stuff you talk about financiers and the money-market, well, I find it pretty tiresome personally, and I feel sorry that my friends should think they're being very busy when

SYMPOSIUM

they're really doing absolutely nothing Of course, I know your idea of me you think I'm just a poor unfortunate, and I shouldn't wonder if you're right But then, I don't think that you're unfortunate—I know you are

A Friend There you go again, Apollodorus! Always running down yourself and everybody else! You seem to have some extravagant idea that the whole world, with the sole exception of Socrates, is in a state of utter misery—beginning with yourself You're always the same—perhaps that's why people think you're mad—always girding at yourself and all the rest of us, except Socrates of course

Apollodorus My dear man, of course I am! And of course I shouldn't dream of thinking such things about myself or about my friends if I weren't completely crazy

The Friend Oh, come now, Apollodorus! We needn't go into that For heaven's sake, man, don't fly off at a tangent, but simply answer our question What were these speeches about Love?

Apollodorus Well then, they were something like this—but perhaps I'd better begin at the beginning and tell you in Aristodemus' own words

I met Socrates, he told me, looking very spruce

ARISTODEMUS

after his bath, with a nice pair of shoes on although, as you know, he generally goes about barefoot So I asked him where he was going to, cutting such a dash

I'm going to dinner with Agathon, he said I kept away from the public celebrations yesterday because I was afraid there 'd be a crush, but I promised I'd go along this evening And I've got myself up like this because I don't want to disgrace such a distinguished host But what about you? he went on How would you like to join the party uninvited?

Just as you think, I replied

Then come along with me, he said, and we'll adapt the proverb, 'Unbidden do the good frequent the tables of the good' Though, if it comes to that, Homer himself has not so much adapted that very proverb as exploded it, for after making Agamemnon extremely stout and warlike, and Menelaus a most indifferent spearman, he shows Agamemnon making merry after the sacrifice and Menelaus coming to his table uninvited—that is, the lesser man coming to supper with the greater

I'm afraid, said I, that Homer's version is the apter so far as I'm concerned—an uninvited ignoramus going to dinner with a man of letters So you'd better be preparing your excuses on the way, for

SYMPOSIUM

you needn't think I'll apologize for coming without an invitation—I shall plead that you invited me

Two heads are better than one, he said, when it comes to excuses. Well, anyway, let's be off

Having settled this point, continued Aristodemus, we started out, and as we went along Socrates fell into a fit of abstraction and began to lag behind, but when I was going to wait for him he told me to go on ahead. So when I arrived at Agathon's, where the door was standing wide open, I found myself in rather a curious position, for a servant immediately showed me in and announced me to the assembled company, who were already at table and just about to begin. However, the moment Agathon saw me he cried: Ah! Here's Aristodemus—just in time for dinner, and if you've come on business it'll have to wait, that's flat. I was going to invite you yesterday, only I couldn't get hold of you. But I say, where's Socrates? Haven't you brought him with you?

I looked round, supposing that Socrates was bringing up the rear, but he was nowhere to be seen, so I explained that we'd been coming along together, and that I'd come at his invitation.

Very nice of you, said Agathon, but what on earth can have happened to the man?

ARISTODEMUS

He was just coming in behind me, I can't think where he can be

Here, said Agathon to one of the servants, run along and see if you can find Socrates, and show him in And now, my dear Aristodemus, may I put you next to Eryximachus?

And so, Aristodemus went on, I made my toilet and sat down, the servant meanwhile returning with the news that our friend Socrates had retreated into the next-door neighbour's porch And there he stood, said the man and when I asked him in he wouldn't come

This is very odd, said Agathon You must speak to him again, and insist.

But here I broke in I shouldn't do that, I said, you'd much better leave him to himself It's quite a habit of his, you know, off he goes and there he stands, no matter where it is I've no doubt he'll be with us before long, so I really don't think you'd better worry him

Oh, very well, said Agathon, I expect you know best We won't wait then, he said, turning to the servants Now you understand, you fellows are to serve whatever kind of dinner you think fit, I'm leaving it entirely to you I know it's a new idea, but

SYMPOSIUM

you'll simply have to imagine that we've all come here as your guests. Now go ahead and show us what you can do.

Well, we started dinner, and still there was no sign of Socrates. Agathon still wanted to send for him, but I wouldn't let him. And when at last he did turn up, we weren't more than half-way through dinner, which was pretty good for him. As he came in, Agathon, who was sitting by himself at the far end of the table, called out:

Here you are, Socrates, come and sit next to me. I want to share this great thought that's just struck you in the porch next door. I'm sure you must have mastered it, or you'd still be standing there.

My dear Agathon, Socrates replied as he took his seat beside him, I only wish that wisdom were the kind of thing one could share by sitting next to someone. If it flowed, for instance, from the one that was full to the one that was empty, like the water in two cups finding its level through a piece of worsted. If that were how it worked, I'm sure I'd congratulate myself on sitting next to you, for you'd soon have me brimming over with the most exquisite kind of wisdom. My own understanding is a shadowy thing at best, as equivocal as a dream, but

SOCRATES

yours, Agathon, glitters and dilates — as which of us can forget that saw you the other day, resplendent in your youth, visibly kindled before the eyes of more than thirty thousand of your fellow Greeks

Now, Socrates, said Agathon, I know you're making fun of me, however, I shall take up this question of wisdom with you later on, and let Bacchus judge between us. In the meantime you must really show a little interest in your food

So Socrates drew up and had his dinner with the rest of them, and then, after the libation and the usual hymn and so forth, they began to turn their attention to the wine. It was Pausanias, so far as Aristodemus could remember, who opened the conversation. Well, gentlemen, he began, what do you say? What sort of a night shall we make of it? Speaking for myself, I'm not quite up to form, I'm still a bit the worse for what I had last night, and I don't suppose you're most of you much better — we were all in the same boat. Anyhow, what do you say? How does everybody feel about the drink?

That's a most sensible question of yours, Pausanias, said Aristophanes, we don't want to make a burden of it — I speak as one who was pretty well soaked last night

SYMPOSIUM

I quite agree, observed Eryximachus, and there is just one question I should like to add what about Agathon? Has he sufficiently recovered to feel like drinking?

Not I, said Agathon You can count me out

So much the better for me, then, said Eryximachus, and so much the better for Aristodemus and Phaedrus and one or two more I could mention, we never could keep up with heavy drinkers like the rest of you I say nothing of Socrates, for we know he's equal to any occasion, drunk or sober And now, gentlemen, since nobody seems very anxious to get drunk to-night, I may perhaps be pardoned if I take this opportunity of saying a few words on the true nature of inebriation My own experience in medicine has entirely satisfied me that vinous excess is detrimental to the human frame And therefore I can never be a willing party to heavy drinking, as regards either myself or my friends—especially when one is only partially recovered from the excesses of the previous night

But here Phaedrus broke in My dear Eryximachus, he said, I always do what you tell me to, specially when it really is a case of 'doctor's orders', and I think the others would be well advised to do the

ERYXIMACHUS

same Whereupon it was unanimously agreed that this was not to be a drunken party, and that the wine was to be served merely by way of refreshment

Very well, then, said Eryximachus, since it is agreed that we need none of us drink more than we think is good for us, I also propose that we dispense with the services of the flute-girl who has just come in, and let her go and play to herself or to the women inside there, whichever she prefers, while we spend our evening in discussion of a subject which, if you think fit, I am prepared to name

It was generally agreed that he should go on with his proposal, so he continued If I may preface my remarks by a tag from Euripides, 'the tale is not my own,' as Melanippe says, that I am going to tell, but properly belongs to my friend Phaedrus here, who is continually coming to me with the following complaint Is it not, he asks me, an extraordinary thing, that, for all the hymns and anthems that have been addressed to the other deities, not one single poet has ever sung a song in praise of so ancient and so powerful a god as Love?

Take such distinguished men of letters as Prodicus, for instance, with their eulogies in prose of Hercules and all the rest of them — not that they 're so much

SYMPOSIUM

out of the way either, but do you know, I once came across a book which enumerated the uses of common salt and sang its praises in the most extravagant terms, and not only salt but all kinds of everyday commodities. Now isn't it, as I say, an extraordinary thing, Eryximachus, that while all these screeds have been written on such trivial subjects, the god of Love has found no man bold enough to sing his praises as they should be sung—Is it not, in short, amazing that there should be so little reverence shown to such a god?

This, gentlemen, is Phaedrus' complaint, and I must say I think it is justified. And, moreover, not only am I willing to oblige him with a contribution on my own account, but also I suggest that this is a most suitable occasion for each one of us to pay homage to the god. If therefore, gentlemen, this meets with your approval, I venture to think we may spend a very pleasant evening in discussion. I suppose the best way would be for each in turn from left to right to address the company and speak to the best of his ability in praise of Love. Phaedrus, I think, should open the debate, for besides being head of the table he is the real author of our discussion.

The motion is carried, Eryximachus, said Socrates,

S O C R A T E S

unanimously, I should think Speaking for myself, I couldn't very well dissent when I claim that Love is the one thing in the world I understand, nor could Agathon and Pausanias, neither could Aristophanes, whose whole life is devoted to Dionysus and Aphrodite, no more could any of our friends who are here with us to-night Of course, your procedure will come very hard on us who are sitting at the bottom of the table, but if the earlier speeches are fine enough, I promise you we shan't complain So let Phaedrus go ahead with his eulogy of Love — and good luck to him

Then all the rest of them agreed, and told Phaedrus to begin — but before I go on I must make it quite clear that Aristodemus did not pretend to reproduce the various speeches verbatim, any more than I could repeat them word for word as I had them from him I shall simply recount such passages as the speaker or the thought itself made, so far as I could judge, especially memorable As I was saying, then, Phaedrus opened with some such arguments as these That Love was a great god, wonderful alike to the gods and to mankind and that of all the proofs of this the greatest was his birth The worship of this god, he said, is of the oldest, for Love is unbegotten, nor

SYMPOSIUM

is there mention of his parentage to be found anywhere in either prose or verse, while Hesiod tells us expressly that chaos first appeared, and then

From chaos rose broad-bosomed earth, the sure
And everlasting seat of all that is,

And after, Love

Acusilaus agrees with Hesiod, for he holds that after chaos were brought forth these twain, earth and Love, and Parmenides writes of the creative principle

And Love she framed the first of all the gods

Thus we find that the antiquity of Love is universally admitted, and in very truth he is the ancient source of all our highest good. For I, at any rate, could hardly name a greater blessing to the man that is to be, than a generous lover, or, to the lover, than the beloved youth. For neither family, nor privilege, nor wealth, nor anything but Love can light that beacon which a man must steer by when he sets out to live the better life. How shall I describe it—as that contempt for the vile, and emulation of the good, without which neither cities nor citizens are capable of any great or noble work. And I will say this of the lover, that, should he be discovered in some inglorious act, or in abject submission to ill-usage, he

PHAEDRUS

could better bear that any one—father, friends, or who you will—should witness it than his beloved. And the same holds good of the beloved that his confusion would be more than ever painful if he were seen by his lovers in an unworthy light

If only, then, a city or an army could be composed of none but lover and beloved, how could they deserve better of their country than by shunning all that is base, in mutual emulation, and men like these fighting shoulder to shoulder, few as they were, might conquer—I had almost said—the whole world in arms. For the lover would rather any one than his beloved should see him leave the ranks or throw away his arms in flight—nay, he would sooner die a thousand deaths. Nor is there any lover so faint of heart that he could desert his beloved or fail to help him in the hour of peril, for the very presence of Love kindles the same flame of valour in the faintest heart that burns in those whose courage is innate. And so, when Homer writes that some god 'breathed might' into one of the heroes, we may take it that this is what the power of Love effects in the heart of the lover

And again, nothing but Love will make a man offer his life for another's—and not only man but woman,

SYMPOSIUM

of which last we Greeks can ask no better witness than Alcestis, for she alone was ready to lay down her life for her husband, for all he had a father and a mother, whose love fell so far short of hers in charity that they seemed to be alien to their own son, and bound to him by nothing but a name. But hers was accounted so great a sacrifice, not only by mankind but by the gods, that in recognition of her magnanimity it was granted—and among the many doers of many noble deeds there is only the merest handful to whom such grace has been given—that her soul should rise again from the Stygian depths.

Thus heaven itself has a peculiar regard for ardour and resolution in the cause of Love. And yet the gods sent Orpheus away from Hades empty-handed, and showed him the mere shadow of the woman he had come to seek. Eurydice herself they would not let him take, because he seemed, like the mere minstrel that he was, to be a lukewarm lover, lacking the courage to die as Alcestis died for love, and choosing rather to scheme his way, living, into Hades. And it was for this that the gods doomed him, and doomed him justly, to meet his death at the hands of women.

How different was the fate of Achilles, Thetis' son, whom they sent with honours to the Islands of the

PHAEDRUS

Blessed, because, after learning from his mother that if he slew Hector he should die, while if he spared him he should end his days at home in the fullness of his years, he made the braver choice and went to rescue his lover Patroclus, avenged his death, and so died, not only for his friend, but to be with his friend in death. And it was because his lover had been so precious to him that he was honoured so signally by the gods.

I may say that Aeschylus has reversed the relation between them by referring to Patroclus as Achilles' darling, whereas Achilles, we know, was much handsomer than Patroclus or any of the heroes, and was besides still beardless and, as Homer says, by far the younger of the two. I make a point of this because, while in any case the gods display especial admiration for the valour that springs from Love, they are even more amazed, delighted, and beneficent when the beloved shows such devotion to his lover, than when the lover does the same for his beloved. For the lover, by virtue of Love's inspiration, is always nearer than his beloved to the gods. And this, I say, is why they paid more honour to Achilles than to Alcestis, and sent him to the Islands of the Blessed.

In short, this, gentlemen, is my theme: that Love

SYMPOSIUM

is the oldest and most glorious of the gods, the great giver of all goodness and happiness to men, alike to the living and to the dead

This, to the best of Aristodemus' recollection, was Phaedrus' speech. It was followed by several more which had almost, if not quite, escaped him, so he went straight on to Pausanias, who spoke as follows

I am afraid, my dear Phaedrus, that our arrangement won't work very well if it means that we are simply to pronounce a eulogy of Love. It would be all very well if there were only one kind of Love, but unfortunately this is not the case, and we should therefore have begun by stipulating which kind in particular was to receive our homage. In the circumstances I will try to set the matter right by first defining the Love whom we are to honour, and then singing his praises in terms not unworthy, I hope, of his divinity

Now you will all agree, gentlemen, that without Love there could be no such goddess as Aphrodite. If, then, there were only one goddess of that name, we might suppose that there was only one kind of Love, but since in fact there are two such goddesses there must also be two kinds of Love. No one, I think,

PAUSANIAS

will deny that there are two goddesses of that name one, the elder, sprung from no mother's womb but from the heavens themselves, we call the Uranian, the heavenly Aphrodite, while the younger, daughter of Zeus and Dione, we call Pandemus, the earthly Aphrodite. It follows, then, that Love should be known as earthly or as heavenly according to the goddess in whose company his work is done. And our business, gentlemen — I need hardly say that every god must command our homage — our business at the moment is to define the attributes peculiar to each of these two.

Now it may be said of any kind of action that the action itself, as such, is neither good nor bad. Take, for example, what we are doing now: neither drinking nor singing nor talking have any virtue in themselves, for the outcome of each action depends upon how it is performed. If it is done rightly and finely, the action will be good; if it is done basely, bad. And this holds good of loving, for Love is not of himself either admirable or noble, but only when he moves us to love nobly.

Well then, gentlemen, the earthly Aphrodite's Love is a very earthly Love indeed, and does his work entirely at random. It is he that governs the passions

SYMPOSIUM

of the vulgar, for, first, they are as much attracted by women as by boys, next, whoever they may love, their desires are of the body rather than of the soul, and, finally, they make a point of courting the shallowest people they can find, looking forward to the mere act of fruition and careless whether it be a worthy or unworthy consummation. And hence they take their pleasures where they find them, good and bad alike, for this is the Love of the younger Aphrodite, whose nature partakes of both male and female.

But the heavenly Love springs from a goddess whose attributes have nothing of the female, but are altogether male, and who is also the elder of the two, and innocent of any hint of lewdness. And so those who are inspired by this other Love turn rather to the male, preferring the more vigorous and intellectual bent. One can always tell — even among the lovers of boys — the man who is wholly governed by this elder Love, for no boy can please him until he has shown the first signs of dawning intelligence, signs which generally appear with the first growth of beard. And it seems to me that the man who falls in love with a youth of such an age will be prepared to spend all his time with him, to share his whole

PAUSANIAS

life with him, in fact, nor will he be likely to take advantage of the lad's youth and credulity by seducing him and then turning with a laugh to some newer love

But I cannot help thinking, gentlemen, that there should be a law to forbid the loving of mere boys, a law to prevent so much time and trouble being wasted upon an unknown quantity—for what else, after all, is the future of any boy, and who knows whether he will follow the paths of virtue or of vice, in body and in soul? Of course, your man of principle is a law unto himself, but these followers of the earthly Love should be legally compelled to observe a similar restraint—just as we prevent them, as far as possible, from making love to our own wives and daughters—for it is their behaviour that has brought the name of Love into such disrepute that one has even heard it held to be degrading to yield to a lover's solicitation. Any one who can hold such a view must surely have in mind these earthly lovers, with their offensive importunities, for there can be nothing derogatory in any conduct which is sanctioned both by decency and custom

Then again, gentlemen, may I point out that, while in all the other States of Hellas the laws that deal

SYMPOSIUM

with Love are so simple and well defined that they are easy enough to master, our own code is most involved. In Elis and Boeotia, for instance, and wherever else the people are naturally inarticulate, it has been definitely ruled that it is right for the lover to have his way, nor does any one, old or young, presume to say that it is wrong, the idea being, I suppose, to save themselves from having to plead with the young men for their favours—which is rather difficult for lovers who are practically dumb.

On the other hand, in Ionia and many other countries under Oriental rule, the very same thing is held to be disgraceful. Indeed, the Oriental thinks ill not only of Love but also of both philosophy and sport, on account of the despotism under which he lives, for I suppose it does not suit the rulers for their subjects to indulge in high thinking, or in staunch friendship and fellowship, which Love more than anything is likely to beget. And those who seized the power here in Athens learnt the same lesson from bitter experience, for it was the might of Aristogeiton's love and Harmodius' friendship that brought their reign to an end. Thus, wherever the law enacts that it is wrong to yield to the lover, you may be sure that the fault lies with the legislators, that is to say,

PAUSANIAS

it is due to the oppression of the rulers and the servility of their subjects. On the other hand, wherever you find the same thing expressly sanctioned, you may blame the legislators' mental inertia.

But in Athens, gentlemen, we have a far more admirable code — a code which, as I was saying, is not nearly so easy to understand. Take for instance our maxim that it is better to love openly than in secret, especially when the object of one's passion is eminent in nobility and virtue, and even if his personal appearance should lack the same distinction, and think how we all love to cheer the lover on, without the least idea that he is doing anything unworthy, and how we see honour in his success and shame in his defeat. And remember, gentlemen, what latitude the law offers to the lover in the prosecution of his suit, and how he may be actually applauded for conduct which, in any other circumstances or in any other cause, would call down upon him the severest censure.

Imagine what would happen to a man who wanted to get money out of someone, or a post, or powers of some kind, and who therefore thought fit to behave as the lover behaves to his beloved — urging his need with prayers and entreaties, and vowing vows,

SYMPOSIUM

and sleeping upon doorsteps, subjecting himself, in short, to a slavery which no slave would ever endure — why, gentlemen, not only his friends, but his very enemies, would do their best to stop him, for his enemies would accuse him of the most abject servility, while his friends would take him to task because they felt ashamed of him

But when it is a lover who does this kind of thing people only think the more of him, and the law expressly sanctions his conduct as the means to an honourable end And, what is the most extraordinary thing of all, it is popularly supposed that the lover is the one man whom the gods will pardon for breaking his vows for lovers' promises, they say, are made to be forsworn And so, gentlemen, we see what complete indulgence, not only human but divine, is accorded to the lover by our Athenian code

In view of this, one would have thought that, here if anywhere, loving and being kind to one's lover would have been positively applauded Yet we find in practice that if a father discovers that someone has fallen in love with his son, he puts the boy in charge of an attendant, with strict injunctions not to let him have anything to do with his lover, and if the boy's little friends and playmates see anything

PAUSANIAS

of that kind going on, you may be sure they 'll call him names, while their elders will neither stop their being rude nor tell them they are talking nonsense. So if there were no more to it than that, any one would think that we Athenians were really shocked at the idea of yielding to a lover.

But I fancy we can account for the apparent contradiction if we remember that the moral value of the act is not what one might call a constant. We agreed that Love itself, as such, was neither good nor bad, but only in so far as it led to good or bad behaviour. It is base to indulge a vicious lover viciously, but noble to gratify a virtuous lover virtuously. Now the vicious lover is the follower of the earthly Love who desires the body rather than the soul, his heart is set on what is mutable and must therefore be inconstant. And as soon as the body he loves begins to pass the first flower of its beauty, he 'spreads his wings and flies away,' giving the lie to all his pretty speeches and dishonouring his vows, whereas the lover whose heart is touched by moral beauties is constant all his life, for he has become one with what will never fade.

Now it is the object of the Athenian law to make a firm distinction between the lover who should be

SYMPOSIUM

encouraged and the lover who should be shunned And so it enjoins pursuit in certain cases, and flight in others, and applies various touchstones and criteria to discriminate between the two classes of lover and beloved And this is why it is immoral, according to our code, to yield too promptly to solicitation, there should first be a certain lapse of time, which is generally considered to be the most effective test Secondly, it is immoral when the surrender is due to financial or political considerations, or to unmanly fear of ill-treatment, it is immoral, in short, if the youth fails to show the contempt he should for any advantage he may gain in pocket or position For in motives such as these we can find nothing fixed or permanent, except, perhaps, the certainty that they have never been the cause of any noble friendship

There remains, therefore, only one course open to the beloved if he is to yield to his lover without offending our ideas of decency it is held that, just as the lover's willing and complete subjection to his beloved is neither abject nor culpable, so there is one other form of voluntary submission that shall be blameless — a submission which is made for the sake of virtue And so, gentlemen, if any one is prepared to devote himself to the service of another in

PAUSANIAS

the belief that through him he will find increase of wisdom or of any other virtue, we hold that such willing servitude is neither base nor abject

We must therefore combine these two laws — the one that deals with the love of boys and the one that deals with the pursuit of wisdom and the other virtues — before we can agree that the youth is justified in yielding to his lover. For it is only when lover and beloved come together, each governed by his own especial law — the former lawfully enslaving himself to the youth he loves, in return for his compliance the latter lawfully devoting his services to the friend who is helping him to become wise and good — the one sharing his wealth of wisdom and virtue, and the other drawing, in his poverty, upon his friend for a liberal education — it is then, I say, and only then, when the observance of the two laws coincides, that it is right for the lover to have his way

There is no shame in being disappointed of such hopes as these, but any other kind of hope, whether it comes true or not, is shameful in itself. Take the case of a youth who gratifies his lover in the belief that he is wealthy and in the hope of making money such hopes will be none the less discreditable if he

SYMPOSIUM

finds in the event that he has been the prey of a penniless seducer, for he will have shown himself for what he is, the kind of person, namely, who will do anything for money — which is nothing to be proud of. But suppose that he had yielded because he believed in his lover's virtue, and hoped to be improved by such an association: then, even if he discovered in the end that he had been duped by an unholy blackguard, there would still have been something noble in his mistake, for he, too, would have shown himself for what he was — the kind of person who will do anything for anybody for the sake of progress in the ways of virtue, and what, gentlemen, could be more admirable than that? I conclude, therefore, that it is right to let the lover have his way in the interests of virtue.

Such, then, is the Love of the heavenly Aphrodite, heavenly in himself and precious alike to cities and to men, for he constrains both lover and beloved to pay the most earnest heed to their moral welfare, but all the rest are followers of the other, the earthly Aphrodite. And this, Phaedrus, is all I have to say, extempore, on the subject of Love.

When Pausanias had paused — you see the kind of tricks we catch from our philologists, with

ERYXIMACHUS

their punning derivations—the next speaker, so Aristodemus went on to tell me, should have been Aristophanes, only as it happened, whether he'd been overeating I don't know, but he had got the hiccups so badly that he really wasn't fit to make a speech. So he said to the doctor, Eryximachus, who was sitting next below him

Eryximachus, you'll either have to cure my hiccups or take my turn and go on speaking till they've stopped

I'm prepared to do both, said Eryximachus, I'll take your turn to speak, and then when you've recovered you can take mine. Meanwhile, you'd better try holding your breath, or if that won't stop your hiccup try gargling with a little water, or if it's particularly stubborn you'll have to get something that you can tickle your nostrils with, and sneeze, and by the time you've done that two or three times you'll find that it will stop, however bad it is

Go ahead, then, said Aristophanes, you make your speech, and I'll be doing as you say

Whereupon Eryximachus spoke as follows. Well, gentlemen, since Pausanias broke off, after an excellent beginning, without having really finished, I must try to wind up his argument myself. I admit that in

SYMPOSIUM

defining the two kinds of Love he has drawn a very useful distinction , but the science of medicine seems to me to prove that, besides attracting the souls of men to human beauty, Love has many other objects and many other subjects , and that his influence may be traced both in the brute and the vegetable creations, and I think I may say, in every form of existence — so great, so wonderful, and so all-embracing is the power of Love in every activity, whether sacred or profane

I propose, in deference to my own profession, to begin with the medical aspect I would have you know that the body comprehends in its very nature the dichotomy of Love , for, as we all agree, bodily health and sickness are both distinct and dissimilar , and unlike clings to unlike And so the desires of health are one thing, while the desires of sickness are quite another I confirm what Pausanias has observed, that it is right to yield to the virtuous and wrong to yield to the vicious lover , and similarly, in the case of the body, it is both right and necessary to gratify such desires as are sound and healthy in each particular case , and this is what we call the art of medicine But it is utterly wrong to indulge such desires as are bad and morbid, nor must any one

ERYXIMACHUS

who hopes to become expert in this profession lend his countenance to such indulgence For medicine may be described as the science of what the body loves, or desires, as regards repletion and evacuation, and the man who can distinguish between what is harmful and what is beneficial in these desires may claim to be a physician in the fullest sense of the word And if he can replace one desire with another, and produce the requisite desire when it is absent, or, if necessary, remove it when it is present, then we shall regard him as an expert practitioner

Yes, gentlemen, he must be able to reconcile the jarring elements of the body, and force them, as it were, to fall in love with one another Now, we know that the most hostile elements are the opposites, hot and cold, sweet and sour, wet and dry, and so on, and if, as I do myself, we are to believe these poets of ours, it was his skill in imposing love and concord upon these opposites that enabled our illustrious progenitor Asclepius to found the science of medicine

And so, gentlemen, I maintain that medicine is under the sole direction of the god of Love, as are also the gymnastic and the agronomic arts And it must be obvious to the most casual observer that the

SYMPOSIUM

same holds good of music — which is, perhaps, what Heracleitus meant us to understand by that rather cryptic pronouncement 'The one in conflict with itself is held together, like the harmony of the bow and of the lyre ' Of course it is absurd to speak of harmony as being in conflict, or as arising out of elements which are still conflicting , but perhaps he meant that the art of music was to create harmony by resolving the discord between the treble and the bass There can certainly be no harmony of treble and bass while they are still in conflict, for harmony is concord, and concord is a kind of sympathy , and sympathy between things which are in conflict is impossible so long as that conflict lasts There is, on the other hand, a kind of discord which it is not impossible to resolve, and here we may effect a harmony — as, for instance, we produce rhythm by resolving the difference between fast and slow And just as we saw that the concord of the body was brought about by the art of medicine, so this other harmony is due to the art of music, as the creator of mutual love and sympathy And so we may describe music, too, as a science of love, or of desire — in this case in relation to harmony and rhythm

ERYXIMACHUS

It is easy enough to distinguish the principle of Love in this rhythmic and harmonic union, nor is there so far any question of Love's dichotomy. But when we come to the application of rhythm and harmony to human activities — as for instance the composition of a song, or the instruction of others in the correct performance of airs and measures which have already been composed — then, gentlemen, we meet with difficulties which call for expert handling. And this brings us back to our previous conclusion, that we are justified in yielding to the desires of the temperate — and of the intemperate in so far as such compliance will tend to sober them, and to this Love, gentlemen, we must hold fast, for he is the fair and heavenly one, born of Urania, the muse of heaven. But as for that other, the earthly Love, he is sprung from Polymnia, the muse of many songs, and whatever we have to do with him we must be very careful not to add the evils of excess to the enjoyment of the pleasures he affords — just as, in my own profession, it is an important part of our duties to regulate the pleasures of the table so that we may enjoy our meals without being the worse for them. And so in music, in medicine, and in every activity, whether sacred or profane, we

SYMPOSIUM

must do our utmost to distinguish the two kinds of Love, for you may be sure that they will both be there

And again, we find these two elements in the seasons of the year, for when the regulating principle of Love brings together those opposites of which I spoke — hot and cold, wet and dry — and compounds them in an ordered harmony, the result is health and plenty for mankind, and for the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and all goes as it should. But when the seasons are under the influence of that other Love, all is mischief and destruction, for now plague and disease of every kind attack both herds and crops, and not only these, but frost and hail and blight — and all of them are due to the uncontrolled and the acquisitive in that great system of Love which the astronomer observes when he investigates the movements of the stars and the seasons of the year

And further, the sole concern of every rite of sacrifice and divination — that is to say, the means of communion between god and man — is either the preservation or the repair of Love. For most of our impiety springs from our refusal to gratify the more temperate Love, and to respect and defer to him

ERYXIMACHUS

in everything we do, and from our following that other Love in our attitude towards our parents, whether alive or dead, and towards the gods. It is the diviner's office to be the guide and healer of these Loves, and his art of divination, with its power to distinguish those principles of human love that tend to decency and reverence, is, in fact, the source of concord between god and man.

And so, gentlemen, the power of Love in its entirety is various and mighty, nay, all-embracing, but the mightiest power of all is wielded by that Love whose just and temperate consummation, whether in heaven or on earth, tends towards the good. It is he that bestows our every joy upon us, and it is through him that we are capable of the pleasures of society, aye, and friendship even, with the gods our masters.

And now, gentlemen, if, as is not unlikely, there are many points I have omitted in my praise of Love, let me assure you that such omissions have been unintentional. It is for you, Aristophanes, to make good my deficiencies, that is unless you're thinking of some other kind of eulogy. But in any case, let us hear what you have to say — now you've recovered from your hiccups.

SYMPOSIUM

To which, Aristodemus went on to tell me, Aristophanes replied

Yes, I'm better now, thank you, but not before I'd had recourse to sneezing — which made me wonder, Eryximachus, how your orderly principle of the body could possibly have called for such an appalling union of noise and irritation yet there's no denying that the hiccups stopped immediately I sneezed

Now, Aristophanes, take care, retorted Eryximachus, and don't try to raise a laugh before you've even started You'll only have yourself to thank if I'm waiting to pounce on your silly jokes, instead of giving your speech a proper hearing

Aristophanes laughed You're quite right, Eryximachus, he said, I take it all back But don't be too hard on me Not that I mind if what I'm going to say is funny — all the better if it is besides, a comic poet is supposed to be amusing I'm only afraid of being utterly absurd

Now, Aristophanes, said Eryximachus, I know the way you loose your shafts of ridicule and run away But don't forget that anything you say may be used against you — and yet, who knows? perhaps I shall decide to let you go with a caution

Well then, Eryximachus, Aristophanes began. I

ARISTOPHANES

propose, as you suggested, to take quite a different line from you and Pausanias. I am convinced that mankind has never had any conception of the power of Love, for if we had known him as he really is, surely we should have raised the mightiest temples and altars, and offered the most splendid sacrifices, in his honour, and not — as in fact we do — have utterly neglected him. Yet he of all the gods has the best title to our service, for he, more than all the rest, is the friend of man: he is our great ally, and it is he that cures us of those ills whose relief opens the way to man's highest happiness. And so, gentlemen, I will do my best to acquaint you with the power of Love, and you in your turn shall pass the lesson on.

First of all I must explain the real nature of man, and the change which it has undergone — for in the beginning we were nothing like we are now. For one thing, the race was divided into three, that is to say, besides the two sexes, male and female, which we have at present, there was a third which partook of the nature of both, and for which we still have a name, though the creature itself is forgotten. For though 'hermaphrodite' is only used nowadays as a term of contempt, there really was

SYMPOSIUM

a man-woman in those days, a being which was half male and half female

And secondly, gentlemen, each of these beings was globular in shape, with rounded back and sides, four arms and four legs, and two faces, both the same, on a cylindrical neck, and one head, with one face one side and one the other, and four ears, and two lots of privates, and all the other parts to match. They walked erect, as we do ourselves, backwards or forwards, whichever they pleased, but when they broke into a run they simply stuck their legs straight out and went whirling round and round like a clown turning cartwheels. And since they had eight legs, if you count their arms as well, you can imagine that they went bowling along at a pretty good speed.

The three sexes, I may say, arose as follows: the males were descended from the sun, the females from the earth, and the hermaphrodites from the moon, which partakes of either sex, and they were round and they went round, because they took after their parents. And such, gentlemen, was their strength and energy, and such their arrogance, that they actually tried — like Ephialtes and Otus in Homer — to scale the heights of heaven and set upon the gods.

ARISTOPHANES

At this Zeus took counsel with the other gods as to what was to be done. They found themselves in rather an awkward position, they didn't want to blast them out of existence with thunderbolts as they did the giants, because that would be saying good-bye to all their offerings and devotions, but at the same time they couldn't let them get altogether out of hand. At last, however, after racking his brains, Zeus offered a solution.

I think I can see my way, he said, to put an end to this disturbance by weakening these people without destroying them. What I propose to do is to cut them all in half, thus killing two birds with one stone, for each one will be only half as strong, and there'll be twice as many of them, which will suit us very nicely. They can walk about, upright, on their two legs, and if, said Zeus, I have any more trouble with them, I shall split them up again, and they'll have to hop about on one.

So saying, he cut them all in half just as you or I might chop up sorb-apples for pickling, or slice an egg with a hair. And as each half was ready he told Apollo to turn its face, with the half-neck that was left, towards the side that was cut away — thinking that the sight of such a gash might frighten it into

SYMPOSIUM

keeping quiet — and then to heal the whole thing up. So Apollo turned their faces back to front, and, pulling in the skin all the way round, he stretched it over what we now call the belly — like those bags you pull together with a string — and tied up the one remaining opening so as to form what we call the navel. As for the creases that were left, he smoothed most of them away, finishing off the chest with the sort of tool a cobbler uses to smooth down the leather on the last, but he left a few puckers round about the belly and the navel, to remind us of what we suffered long ago.

Now, when the work of bisection was complete it left each half with a desperate yearning for the other, and they ran together and flung their arms around each other's necks, and asked for nothing better than to be rolled into one. So much so, that they began to die of hunger and general inertia, for neither would do anything without the other. And whenever one half was left alone by the death of its mate, it wandered about questing and clasping in the hope of finding a spare half-woman — or a whole woman, as we should call her nowadays — or half a man. And so the race was dying out.

Fortunately, however, Zeus felt so sorry for them

ARISTOPHANES

that he devised another scheme. He moved their privates round to the front, for of course they had originally been on the outside—which was now the back—and they had begotten and conceived not upon each other, but, like the grasshoppers, upon the earth. So now, as I say, he moved their members round to the front and made them propagate among themselves, the male begetting upon the female—the idea being that if, in all these clippings and claspings, a man should chance upon a woman, conception would take place and the race would be continued while if man should conjugate with man, he might at least obtain such satisfaction as would allow him to turn his attention and his energies to the everyday affairs of life. So you see, gentlemen, how far back we can trace our innate love for one another, and how this love is always trying to reintegrate our former nature, to make two into one, and to bridge the gulf between one human being and another.

And so, gentlemen, we are all like pieces of the coins that children break in half for keepsakes—making two out of one, like the flat-fish—and each of us is for ever seeking the half that will tally with himself. The man who is a slice of the hermaphrodite

SYMPOSIUM

sex, as it was called, will naturally be attracted by women—the adulterer, for instance, and women who run after men are of similar descent—as, for instance, the unfaithful wife. But the woman who is a slice of the original female is attracted by women rather than by men—in fact she is a Lesbian while men who are slices of the male are followers of the male, and show their masculinity throughout their boyhood by the way they make friends with men, and the delight they take in lying beside them and being taken in their arms. And these are the most hopeful of the nation's youth, for theirs is the most virile constitution.

I know there are some people who call them shameless, but they are wrong. It is not immodesty that leads them to such pleasures, but daring, fortitude, and masculinity, the very virtues that they recognize and welcome in their lovers—which is proved by the fact that in after years they are the only men who show any real manliness in public life. And so, when they themselves have come to manhood, their love in turn is lavished upon boys; they have no natural inclination to marry and beget children. Indeed, they only do so in deference to the usage of society, for they would just as soon

ARISTOPHANES

renounce marriage altogether and spend their lives with one another

Such a man, then, gentlemen, is of an amorous disposition, and gives his love to boys, always clinging to his like. And so, when this boy-lover—or any lover, for that matter—is fortunate enough to meet his other half, they are both so intoxicated with affection, with friendship, and with love, that they cannot bear to let each other out of sight for a single instant. It is such reunions as these that impel men to spend their lives together, although they may be hard put to it to say what they really want with one another, and indeed, the purely sexual pleasures of their friendship could hardly account for the huge delight they take in one another's company. The fact is that both their souls are longing for a something else—a something to which they can neither of them put a name, and which they can only give an inkling of in cryptic sayings and prophetic riddles.

Now, supposing Hephaestus were to come and stand over them with his tool-bag as they lay there side by side, and suppose he were to ask

Tell me, my dear creatures, what do you really want with one another?

SYMPOSIUM

And suppose they didn't know what to say, and he went on

How would you like to be rolled into one, so that you could always be together, day and night, and never be parted again? Because if that's what you want, I can easily weld you together, and then you can live your two lives in one, and, when the time comes, you can die a common death and still be two-in-one in the lower world. Now, what do you say? Is that what you'd like me to do? And would you be happy if I did?

We may be sure, gentlemen, that no lover on earth would dream of refusing such an offer, for not one of them could imagine a happier fate. Indeed, they would be convinced that this was just what they'd been waiting for — to be merged, that is, into an utter one-ness with the beloved.

And so all this to-do is a relic of that original state of ours, when we were whole, and now, when we are longing for and following after that primeval wholeness, we say we are in love. For there was a time, I repeat, when we were one, but now, for our sins, god has scattered us abroad, as the Spartans scattered the Arcadians. Moreover, gentlemen, there is every reason to fear that if we neglect the worship

ARISTOPHANES

of the gods, they will split us up again, and then we shall have to go about with our noses sawn asunder, part and counterpart, like the basso-relievos on the tombstones. And therefore it is our duty one and all to inspire our friends with reverence and piety, for so we may ensure our safety and attain that blessed union by enlisting in the army of Love and marching beneath his banners.

For Love must never be withstood—as we do, if we incur the displeasure of the gods. But if we cling to him in friendship and reconciliation, we shall be among the happy few to whom it is given in these latter days to meet their other halves. Now, I don't want any coarse remarks from Eryximachus. I don't mean Pausanias and Agathon, though for all I know they may be among the lucky ones, and both be sections of the male. But what I am trying to say is this: that the happiness of the whole human race, women no less than men, is to be found in the consummation of our love, and in the healing of our dissevered nature by finding each his proper mate. And if this be a counsel of perfection, then we must do what, in our present circumstances, is next best, and bestow our love upon the natures most congenial to our own.

SYMPOSIUM

And so I say that Love, the god who brings all this to pass, is worthy of our hymns, for his is the inestimable and present service of conducting us to our true affinities, and it is he that offers this great hope for the future that, if we do not fail in reverence to the gods, he will one day heal us and restore us to our old estate, and establish us in joy and blessedness

Such, Eryximachus, is my discourse on Love — as different as could be from yours And now I must ask you again will you please refrain from making fun of it, and let us hear what all the others have to say — or rather, the other two, for I see there's no one left but Agathon and Socrates

Well, you shall have your way, said Eryximachus, and, joking apart, I enjoyed your speech immensely Indeed, if I were not aware that Socrates and Agathon were both authorities on Love, I should be wondering what they could find to say after being treated to such a wealth and variety of eloquence But, knowing what they are, I've no doubt we'll find them equal to the occasion

To which Socrates retorted It's all very well for you to talk, Eryximachus, after your own magnificent display, but if you were in my shoes now — or

AGATHON

rather when Agathon has finished speaking — you'd be just as nervous as I am

Now, Socrates, said Agathon, I suppose you're trying to upset me by insisting on the great things my public is expecting of me

My dear Agathon, said Socrates, do you think I don't remember your ease and dignity as you took the stage with the actors the other day, and how you looked that vast audience in the face, as cool as you please, and obviously prepared to show them what you were made of? And am I to suppose that the sight of two or three friends will put you out of countenance?

Ah, but, Socrates, protested Agathon, you mustn't think I'm so infatuated with the theatre as to forget that a man of any judgment cares more for a handful of brains than an army of blockheads

Oh, I should never make such a mistake, Socrates assured him, as to credit you, my dear Agathon, with ideas that smacked of the illiterate. I've no doubt that if you found yourself in what you really considered intellectual company, you'd be more impressed by their opinion than by the mob's. But we, alas, can't claim to be your intelligent minority, for we were there too, you know, helping to swell

SYMPOSIUM

that very crowd But tell me if you were with some other set of people, whose judgment you respected, I suppose you'd feel uncomfortable if they saw you doing anything you thought beneath you Am I right?

Perfectly, said Agathon

And yet, Socrates went on, you wouldn't feel uncomfortable if the mob saw you doing something equally unworthy?

But here Phaedrus stepped in My dear Agathon, he said, if you go on answering his questions he won't care twopence what becomes of our debate, so long as there's someone he can argue with — especially if it's somebody good-looking Now, much as I enjoy listening to Socrates' arguments, it's my duty as chairman to insist that each man makes his speech So I must ask you both to pay your tribute to the god, and then you can argue as much as you please

Phaedrus is right, said Agathon I'm quite prepared to speak After all, I can argue with Socrates any day

Now, before I begin my speech I want to explain what sort of a speech I think it ought to be For to my way of thinking the speakers we have heard so far have been at such pains to congratulate mankind upon the blessings of Love that they have quite forgotten to extol the god himself, and have thrown no

AGATHON

light at all upon the nature of our divine benefactor Yet surely, if we are to praise any one, no matter whom, no matter how, there is only one way to go about it, and that is to indicate the nature of him whose praises we are to sing, and of the blessings he is the author of And so, gentlemen, with Love our duty is first to praise him for what he is, and secondly, for what he gives

And so I shall begin by maintaining that, while all the gods are blessed, Love—be it said in all reverence—is the blessedest of all, for he is the loveliest and the best The loveliest, I say, because first of all, Phaëdrus, he is the youngest of the gods, which is proved by his flight, aye, and his escape, from the ravages of Time, who travels fast enough, too fast, at any rate, for us poor mortals But Love was born to be the enemy of age, and shuns the very sight of senility, clinging always to his like in the company of youth, because he is young himself

I agreed with most of Phaëdrus' speech, but not with his suggestion that Love was older than even Kronos or Iapetus No, gentlemen, Love, in his imperishable youth, is, I repeat, the youngest of them all And as for those old stories of the gods we have read in Hesiod and Parmenides, we may be sure that

SYMPOSIUM

any such proceedings were the work not of Love but of Necessity—if, indeed, such tales are credible at all. For if Love had been among them then, they would neither have fettered nor gelded one another, they would have used no violence at all, but lived together in peace and concord as they do to-day, and as they have done since Love became their heavenly overlord.

It is clear, then, that he is young, and not only young but dainty, with a daintiness that only a Homer could describe. For it is Homer, is it not, who writes of Ate as being both divine and dainty—dainty of foot, that is, 'How delicate,' he says

How delicate her feet who shuns the ground,

Stepping a-tiptoe on the heads of men

Now, you will agree that to prefer what is soft to what is hard is proof enough of being dainty, and the same argument will demonstrate the daintiness of Love, for he never treads upon the ground, nor even on our heads—which, after all, are not so very soft—but lives and moves in the softest thing in the whole of nature. He makes the dispositions and the hearts of gods and men his dwelling-place, not, however, without discrimination, for if the heart he lights upon be hard he flies away to settle in a softer

AGATHON

And so, not only treading on but altogether clinging to the softest of the soft, he must indeed be exquisitely dainty

We see, then, that Love is for one thing the youngest, and for another the most delicate, thing in the world and thirdly, gentlemen, we find that he is tender and supple For if he were hampered by the least inflexibility, how could he wind us in such endless convolutions, and steal into all our hearts so secretly, aye, and leave them, too, when he pleases? And that elegance of his which all the world confesses bears witness to his suppleness and symmetry, for Love and unsightliness will never be at peace Moreover, his life among the flowers argues in himself a loveliness of hue, for Love will never settle upon bodies, or souls, or anything at all where there is no bud to blossom, or where the bloom is faded, but where the ground is thick with flowers and the air with scent, there he will settle, gentlemen, and there he loves to linger

I shall say no more about Love's loveliness—though much remains to say—because we must now consider his moral excellence, and in particular the fact that he is never injured by, nor ever injures, either god or man, for, whatever Love may suffer, it

SYMPOSIUM

cannot be by violence — which, indeed, cannot so much as touch him, nor does he need to go to work by force, for the world asks no compulsion, but is glad to serve him, and, as we know, a compact made in mutual good-will is held to be just and binding by the sovereign power of the law

Added to his righteousness is his entire temperance I may take it, I suppose, for granted that temperance is defined as the power to control our pleasures and our lusts, and that none of these is more powerful than Love. If, therefore, they are weaker, they will be overcome by Love, and he will be their master, so that Love, controlling, as I said, our lusts and pleasures, may be regarded as temperance itself

Then, as to valour as the poet sings

But him not even Ares can withstand

For, as the story goes, it was not Ares that captured Love, but Love that captured Ares — love, that is, of Aphrodite. Now, the captor is stronger than the captive, and therefore Love, by overcoming one who is mightier than all the rest, has shown himself the mightiest of all

So much, gentlemen, for the righteousness of Love, his temperance, and his valour, there remains his genius, to which I must do such scanty justice as I

AGATHON

can First of all, then—if, like Eryximachus, I may give pride of place to my own vocation—Love is himself so divine a poet that he can kindle in the souls of others the poetic fire, for no matter what dull clay we seemed to be before, we are every one of us a poet when we are in love. We need ask no further proof than this that Love is a poet deeply versed in every branch of what I may define succinctly as creative art, for, just as no one can give away what he has not got, so no one can teach what he does not know.

And who will deny that the creative power by which all living things are begotten and brought forth is the very genius of Love? Do we not, moreover, recognize that in every art and craft the artist and the craftsman who work under the direction of this same god achieve the brightest fame, while those that lack his influence grow old in the shadow of oblivion? It was longing and desire that led Apollo to found the arts of archery, healing, and divination—so he, too, was a scholar in the school of Love, it was thus that the fine arts were founded by the Muses, the smithy by Hephaestus, and the loom by Pallas, and thus it was that Zeus himself attained the 'governance of gods and men'. And hence the actions

SYMPOSIUM

of the gods were governed by the birth of Love—love, that is, of beauty, for, as we know, he will have none of ugliness. We are told, as I have already said, that in the beginning there were many strange and terrible happenings among them, because Necessity was king, but ever since the birth of the younger god, Love—the love of what is lovely—has showered every kind of blessing upon gods and men.

And so I say, Phaedrus, that Love, besides being in himself the loveliest and the best, is the author of those very virtues in all around him. And now I am stirred to speak in numbers, and to tell how it is he that brings

Peace upon earth, the breathless calm

That lulls the long-tormented deep,

Rest to the winds, and that sweet balm

And solace of our nature, sleep

And it is he that banishes estrangement and ushers friendship in, it is he that unites us in such friendly gatherings as this, presiding at the table, at the dance, and at the altar, cultivating courtesy and weeding out brutality, lavish of kindness and sparing of malevolence, affable and gracious, the wonder of the wise, the admiration of the gods, the despair of him that lacks, and the happiness of him that has,

AGATHON

the father of delicacy, daintiness, elegance, and grace, of longing and desire, heedful of the good and heedless of the bad, in toil or terror, in drink or dialectic, our helmsman and helper, our pilot and preserver, the richest ornament of heaven and earth alike, and, to conclude, the noblest and the loveliest of leaders, whom every one of us must follow, raising our voices in harmony with the heavenly song of Love that charms both mortal and immortal hearts

And there, my dear Phaedrus, he said, you have my speech, such is my offering to the god of Love. I have done my best to be at once amusing and instructive.

Agathon took his seat, continued Aristodemus, amid a burst of applause, for we all felt that his youthful eloquence did honour to himself as well as to the god. Then Socrates turned to Eryximachus and said:

Well, Eryximachus, you laughed at my misgivings, but you see — they've been justified by the event. There's not much left for me to say after the wonderful speech we've just had from Agathon.

I admit, Eryximachus replied, that your prognosis was correct so far as Agathon's eloquence was concerned, but as to your own embarrassment, I'm not so sure.

SYMPOSIUM

My dear sir, protested Socrates, what chance have I or any one of knowing what to say, after listening to such a flood of eloquence as that? The opening, I admit, was nothing out of the way, but when he came to his peroration, why, he held us all spell-bound with the sheer beauty of his diction while I, personally, was so mortified when I compared it with the best that I could ever hope to do, that for two pins I'd have tried to sneak away. Besides, his speech reminded me so strongly of that master of rhetoric, Gorgias, that I couldn't help thinking of Odysseus, and his fear that Medusa would rise from the lower world among the ghosts, and I was afraid that when Agathon got near the end he would arm his speech against mine with the Gorgon's head of Gorgias' eloquence, and strike me as dumb as a stone.

And then I saw what a fool I'd been to agree to take part in this eulogy of yours, and, what was worse, to claim a special knowledge of the subject, when, as it turned out, I had not the least idea how this or any other eulogy should be conducted. I had imagined in my innocence that one began by stating the facts about the matter in hand, and then proceeded to pick out the most attractive points and

SOCRATES

display them to the best advantage And I flattered myself that my speech would be a great success, because I knew the facts But the truth, it seems, is the last thing the successful eulogist cares about, on the contrary, what he does is simply to run through all the attributes of power and virtue, however irrelevant they may be, and the whole thing may be a pack of lies, for all it seems to matter

I take it then that what we undertook was to flatter, rather than to praise, the god of Love, and that's why you're all prepared to say the first thing about him that comes into your heads, and to claim that he either is, or is the cause of, everything that is loveliest and best And of course the uninitiated are impressed by the beauty and grandeur of your encomiums, yet those who know will not be taken in so easily Well then, I repeat, the whole thing was a misunderstanding, and it was only in my ignorance that I agreed to take part at all I protest, with Euripides' Hippolytus, it was my lips that promised, not my soul, and that, gentlemen, is that I won't have anything to do with your eulogy, and what is more, I couldn't if I tried But I don't mind telling you the truth about Love, if you're interested, only, if I do, I must tell it in my own way, for I'm not

SYMPOSIUM

going to make a fool of myself, at my age, trying to imitate the grand manner that sits so well on the rest of you Now, Phaedrus, it's for you to say have you any use for a speaker who only cares whether his matter is correct and leaves his manner to take care of itself?

Whereupon Phaedrus and the others told him to go ahead and make whatever kind of speech he liked

Very well, said he, but there's just one other thing has our chairman any objection to my asking Agathon a few simple questions? I want to make certain we're not at cross-purposes before I begin my speech

Ask what you like, said Phaedrus, I don't mind

Whereupon Socrates began, so far as Aristodemus could trust his memory, as follows

I must say, my dear Agathon, that the remarks with which you prefaced your speech were very much to the point You were quite right in saying that the first thing you had to do was to acquaint us with the nature of the god, and the second to tell us what he did Yes, your introduction was admirable But now that we've had the pleasure of hearing your magnificent description of Love, there's

SOCRATES

just one little point I'm not quite clear about Tell me, do you think it is the nature of Love to be the love of somebody, or of nobody? I don't mean, is he a mother's or a father's love?— that would be a silly sort of question but suppose I were to ask you whether a father, as a father, must be somebody's father, or not, surely the only reasonable answer would be that a father must be the father of a son or a daughter, am I right?

Why, yes, said Agathon

And could we say the same thing about a mother?

Yes

Good, and now, if you don't mind answering just one or two more questions, I think you'll see what I'm driving at Suppose I were to ask what about a brother, as a brother? Must he be somebody's brother, or not?

Of course he must

You mean, he must be the brother of a brother or a sister

Precisely, said Agathon

Well, then, Socrates went on, I want you to look at Love from the same point of view, is he the love of something, or of nothing?

Of something, naturally

SYMPOSIUM

And now, said Socrates, bearing in mind what Love is the love of, tell me this does he long for what he is in love with, or not?

Of course he longs for it

And does he long for whatever it is he longs for, and is he in love with it, when he's got it, or when he hasn't?

When he hasn't got it, probably

Then isn't it probable, said Socrates, or rather isn't it certain that everything longs for what it lacks, and that nothing longs for what it doesn't lack? I can't help thinking, Agathon, that that's about as certain as anything could be. Don't you think so?

Yes, I suppose it is

Good. Now, tell me is it likely that a big man will want to be big, or a strong man to be strong?

Not if we were right just now

Quite, for the simple reason that neither of them would be lacking in that particular respect

Exactly

For if, Socrates continued, the strong were to long for strength, and the swift for swiftness, and the healthy for health—for I suppose it might be suggested that in such cases as these people long for the very things they have, or are, already, and so I'm

SOCRATES

trying to imagine such a case, to make quite sure we're on the right track—people in their position, Agathon, if you stop to think about them, are bound here and now to have those very qualities, whether they want them or not, so why should they trouble to want them? And so, if we heard someone saying, 'I'm healthy, and I want to be healthy, I'm rich, and I want to be rich, and in fact I want just what I've got,' I think we should be justified in saying, 'But, my dear sir, you've got wealth and health and strength already, and what you want is to go on having them, for at the moment you've got them whether you want them or not. Doesn't it look as if, when you say, "I want these things here and now," you really mean, "What I've got now, I want to go on keeping"?' Don't you think, my dear Agathon, that he'd be bound to agree?

Why, of course he would, said Agathon

Well, then, continued Socrates, desiring to secure something to oneself for ever may be described as loving something which is not yet to hand

Certainly

And therefore, whoever feels a want is wanting something which is not yet to hand, and the object of his love and of his desire is whatever he isn't, or

SYMPOSIUM

whatever he hasn't got — that is to say, whatever he is lacking in

Absolutely

And now, said Socrates, are we agreed upon the following conclusions? — One, that Love is always the love of something, and two, that that something is what he lacks

Agreed, said Agathon

So far, so good, said Socrates, and now, do you remember what you said were the objects of Love, in your speech just now? Perhaps I'd better jog your memory I fancy it was something like this that the actions of the gods were governed by the love of beauty — for of course there was no such thing as the love of ugliness. Wasn't that pretty much what you said?

It was, said Agathon

No doubt you were right, too, said Socrates, and if that's so, doesn't it follow that Love is the love of beauty, and not of ugliness?

It does

And haven't we agreed that Love is the love of something which he hasn't got, and consequently lacks?

Yes

SOCRATES

Then Love has no beauty, but is lacking in it?

Yes, that must follow

Well then, would you suggest that something which lacked beauty and had no part in it was beautiful itself?

Certainly not

And, that being so, can you still maintain that Love is beautiful?

To which Agathon could only reply I begin to be afraid, my dear Socrates, that I didn't know what I was talking about

Never mind, said Socrates, it was a lovely speech, but there's just one more point I suppose you hold that the good is also beautiful?

I do

Then, if Love is lacking in what is beautiful, and if the good and the beautiful are the same, he must also be lacking in what is good

Just as you say, Socrates, he replied, I'm afraid you're quite unanswerable

No, no, dear Agathon it's the truth you find unanswerable, not Socrates And now I'm going to leave you in peace, because I want to talk about some lessons I was given, once upon a time, by a Mantinean woman called Diotima, a woman who

SYMPOSIUM

was deeply versed in this and many other fields of knowledge. It was she who brought about a ten years' postponement of the great plague of Athens on the occasion of a certain sacrifice, and it was she who taught me the philosophy of Love. And now I am going to try to connect her teaching—as well as I can without her help—with the conclusions that Agathon and I have just arrived at. Like him, I shall begin by stating who and what Love is, and go on to describe his functions, and I think the easiest way will be to adopt Diotima's own method of inquiry by question and answer. I'd been telling her pretty much what Agathon has just been telling me—how Love was a great god, and how he was the love of what is beautiful, and she used the same arguments on me that I've just brought to bear on Agathon to prove that, on my own showing, Love was neither beautiful nor good.

Whereupon My dear Diotima, I asked, are you trying to make me believe that Love is bad and ugly?

Heaven forbid, she said, but do you really think that if a thing isn't beautiful it's therefore bound to be ugly?

Why, naturally

SOCRATES

And that what isn't learned must be ignorant?
Have you never heard of something which comes
between the two?

And what's that?

Don't you know, she asked, that holding an opinion which is in fact correct, without being able to give a reason for it, is neither true knowledge — how can it be knowledge without a reason? — nor ignorance — for how can we call it ignorance when it happens to be true? So may we not say that a correct opinion comes midway between knowledge and ignorance?

Yes, I admitted, that's perfectly true

Very well, then, she went on, why must you insist that what isn't beautiful is ugly, and that what isn't good is bad? Now, coming back to Love you've been forced to agree that he is neither good nor beautiful, but that's no reason for thinking that he must be bad and ugly. The fact is that he's between the two

And yet, I said, it's generally agreed that he's a great god

It all depends, she said, on what you mean by 'generally', do you mean simply people that don't know anything about it, or do you include the people that do?

SYMPOSIUM

I meant everybody

At which she laughed, and said Then can you tell me, my dear Socrates, how people can agree that he's a great god when they deny that he's a god at all?

What people do you mean? I asked her

You for one, and I for another

What on earth do you mean by that?

Oh, it's simple enough, she answered Tell me wouldn't you say that all the gods were happy and beautiful? Or would you suggest that any of them were neither?

Good heavens, no! said I

And don't you call people happy when they possess the beautiful and the good?

Why, of course

And yet you agreed just now that Love lacks, and consequently longs for, those very qualities?

Yes, so I did

Then, if he's has no part in either goodness or beauty, how can he be a god?

I suppose he can't be, I admitted

And now, she said, haven't I proved that you're one of the people who don't believe in the divinity of Love?

SOCRATES

Yes, but what can he be, then, I asked her—a mortal?

Not by any means

Well, what then?

What I told you before—half-way between mortal and immortal

And what do you mean by that, Diotima?

A very powerful spirit, Socrates and spirits, you know, are half-way between god and man

What powers have they, then? I asked

They are the envoys and interpreters that ply between heaven and earth, flying upwards with our worship and our prayers, and descending with the heavenly answers and commandments, and since they are between the two estates they weld both sides together and merge them into one great whole. They form the medium of the prophetic arts, of the priestly rites of sacrifice, initiation, and incantation, of divination and of sorcery, for the divine will not mingle directly with the human, and it is only through the mediation of the spirit-world that man can have any intercourse, whether waking or sleeping, with the gods. And the man who is versed in such matters is said to have spiritual powers, as opposed to the mechanical powers of the man who

SYMPOSIUM

is expert in the more mundane arts. There are many spirits, and many kinds of spirits, too, and Love is one of them.

Then who were his parents? I asked.

I'll tell you, she said, though it's rather a long story. On the day of Aphrodite's birth the gods were making merry, and among them was Resource, the son of Craft, and when they had supped, Need came begging at the door because there was good cheer inside. Now, it happened that Resource, having drunk deeply of the heavenly nectar — for this was before the days of wine — wandered out into the garden of Zeus and sank into a heavy sleep, and Need, thinking that to get a child by Resource would mitigate her penury, lay down beside him and in time was brought to bed of Love. So Love became the follower and servant of Aphrodite because he was begotten on the same day that she was born, and further, he was born to love the beautiful since Aphrodite is beautiful herself.

Then again, as the son of Resource and Need, it has been his fate to be always needy, nor is he delicate and lovely as most of us believe, but harsh and arid, barefoot and homeless, sleeping on the naked earth, in doorways, or in the very streets.

SOCRATES

beneath the stars of heaven, and always partaking of his mother's poverty But, secondly, he brings his father's resourcefulness to his designs upon the beautiful and the good, for he is gallant, impetuous, and energetic, a mighty hunter, and a master of device and artifice, at once desirous and full of wisdom, a lifelong seeker after truth, an adept in sorcery, enchantment, and seduction

He is neither mortal nor immortal, for in the space of a day he will be now, when all goes well with him, alive and blooming, and now dying, to be born again by virtue of his father's nature, while what he gains will always ebb away as fast So Love is never altogether in or out of need, and stands, moreover, midway between ignorance and wisdom You must understand that none of the gods are seekers after truth they do not long for wisdom, because they are wise—and why should the wise be seeking the wisdom that is already theirs? Nor, for that matter, do the ignorant seek the truth or crave to be made wise, and indeed, what makes their case so hopeless is that, having neither beauty, nor goodness, nor intelligence, they are satisfied with what they are, and do not long for the virtues they have never missed

Then tell me, Diotima, I said, who are these seekers

SYMPOSIUM

after truth, if they are neither the wise nor the ignorant?

Why, a schoolboy, she replied, could have told you that, after what I've just been saying, they are those that come between the two, and one of them is Love. For wisdom is concerned with the loveliest of things, and Love is the love of what is lovely, and so it follows that Love is a lover of wisdom and, being such, he is placed between wisdom and ignorance — for which his parentage also is responsible, in that his father is full of wisdom and resource, while his mother is devoid of either.

Such, my dear Socrates, is the spirit of Love, and yet I'm not altogether surprised at your idea of him, which was, judging by what you said, that Love was the beloved rather than the lover. So naturally you thought of Love as utterly beautiful, for the beloved is, in fact, beautiful, perfect, delicate, and prosperous — very different from the lover, as I have described him.

Very well, dear lady, I replied, no doubt you're right. But in that case, what good can Love be to humanity?

That's just what I'm coming to, Socrates, she said. So much, then, for the nature and the origin of Love,

SOCRATES

you were right in thinking that he was the love of what is beautiful. But suppose someone were to say: Yes, my dear Socrates, quite so, my dear Diotima, but what do you mean by the love of what is beautiful?—or, to put the question more precisely: What is it that the lover of the beautiful is longing for?

He is longing to make the beautiful his own, I said.

Very well, she replied, but your answer leads to another question: What will he gain by making the beautiful his own?

This, as I had to admit, was more than I could answer on the spur of the moment.

Well then, she went on, suppose that, instead of the beautiful, you were being asked about the good. I put it to you, Socrates: What is it that the lover of the good is longing for?

To make the good his own.

Then what will he gain by making it his own?

I can make a better shot at answering that, I said: he'll gain happiness.

Right, said she, for the happy are happy inasmuch as they possess the good, and since there's no need for us to ask why men should want to be happy, I think your answer is conclusive.

Absolutely, I agreed.

SYMPOSIUM

This longing, then, she went on, this love—is it common to all mankind? What do you think do we all long to make the good our own?

Yes, I said, as far as that goes we're all alike

Well then, Socrates, if we say that everybody always loves the same thing, does that mean that everybody is in love?—or do we mean that some of us are in love, while some of us are not?

I was a little worried about that myself, I confessed

Oh, it's nothing to worry about, she assured me you see, what we've been doing is to give the name of Love to what is only one single aspect of it, we make just the same mistake, you know, with a lot of other names

For instance ?

For instance, poetry You'll agree that there is more than one kind of poetry in the true sense of the word—that is to say, calling something into existence that was not there before, so that every kind of artistic creation is poetry, and every artist is a poet

True

But all the same, she said, we don't call them all poets, do we? We give various names to the various arts, and only call the one particular art that deals

SOCRATES

with music and metre by the name that should be given to them all and that's the only art that we call poetry, while those who practise it are known as poets

Quite

And that's how it is with Love For 'Love, that renowned and all-beguiling power.' includes every kind of longing for happiness and for the good Yet those of us who are subject to this longing in the various fields of business, athletics, philosophy, and so on, are never said to be in love, and are never known as lovers, while the man who devotes himself to what is only one of Love's many activities is given the name that should apply to all the rest as well

Yes, I said, I suppose you must be right

I know it has been suggested, she continued, that lovers are people who are looking for their other halves, but as I see it, Socrates, Love never longs for either the half or the whole of anything except the good, for men will even have their hands and feet cut off if they are once convinced that those members are bad for them Indeed I think we only prize our own belongings in so far as we say that the good belongs to us, and the bad to someone else, for

SYMPOSIUM

what we love is the good and nothing but the good
Or do you disagree?

Good heavens, no! I said

Then may we state categorically that men are
lovers of the good?

Yes, I said, we may

And shouldn't we add that they long for the good
to be their own?

We should

And not merely to be their own but to be their
own for ever?

Yes, that must follow

In short, that Love longs for the good to be his
own for ever?

Yes, I said, that's absolutely true

Very well, then, and that being so, what course
will Love's followers pursue, and in what particular
field will eagerness and exertion be known as Love,
in fact, what is this activity? Can you tell me that,
Socrates?

If I could, my dear Diotima, I retorted, I shouldn't
be so much amazed at your grasp of the subject, and
I shouldn't be coming to you to learn the answer to
that very question

Well, I'll tell you, then, she said, to love is to

SOCRATES

bring forth upon the beautiful, both in body and in soul

I'm afraid that's too deep, I said, for my poor wits to fathom

I'll try to speak more plainly, then We are all of us prolific, Socrates, in body and in soul, and when we reach a certain age our nature urges us to procreation Nor can we be quickened by ugliness, but only by the beautiful Conception, we know, takes place when man and woman come together, but there's a divinity in human propagation, an immortal something in the midst of man's mortality which is incompatible with any kind of discord, and ugliness is at odds with the divine, while beauty is in perfect harmony In propagation, then, beauty is the goddess of both fate and travail, and so when procreancy draws near the beautiful it grows genial and blithe, and birth follows swiftly on conception But when it meets with ugliness it is overcome with heaviness and gloom, and turning away it shrinks into itself and is not brought to bed, but still labours under its painful burden And so, when the procreant is big with child, he is strangely stirred by the beautiful, because he knows that beauty's tenant will bring his travail to an end So you see, Socrates,

SYMPOSIUM

that Love is not exactly a longing for the beautiful, as you suggested

Well, what is it, then ?

A longing not for the beautiful itself, but for the conception and generation that the beautiful effects

Yes No doubt you're right

Of course I'm right, she said And why all this longing for propagation ? Because this is the one deathless and eternal element in our mortality And since we have agreed that the lover longs for the good to be his own for ever, it follows that we are bound to long for immortality as well as for the good — which is to say that Love is a longing for immortality

So much I gathered, gentlemen, at one time and another from Diotima's dissertations upon Love And then one day she asked me

Well, Socrates, and what do you suppose is the cause of all this longing and all this Love ? Haven't you noticed what an extraordinary effect the breeding instinct has upon both animals and birds, and how obsessed they are with the desire, first to mate, and then to rear their litters and their broods, and how the weakest of them are ready to stand up to the strongest in defence of their young, and even die

SOCRATES

for them, and how they are content to bear the pinch of hunger and every kind of hardship, so long as they can rear their offspring? With men, she went on, you might put it down to the power of reason, but how can you account for Love's having such remarkable effects upon the brutes? What do you say to that, Socrates?

Again I had to confess my ignorance

Well, she said, I don't know how you can hope to master the philosophy of Love, if that's too much for you to understand

But, my dear Diotima, I protested, as I said before, that's just why I'm asking you to teach me—because I realize how ignorant I am. And I'd be more than grateful if you'd enlighten me as to the cause not only of this, but of all the various effects of Love.

Well, she said, it's simple enough, so long as you bear in mind what we agreed was the object of Love. For here, too, the principle holds good that the mortal does all it can to put on immortality, and how can it do that except by breeding, and thus ensuring that there will always be a younger generation to take the place of the old?

Now, although we speak of an individual as being the same so long as he continues to exist in the same

SYMPOSIUM

form, and therefore assume that a man is the same person in his dotage as in his infancy , yet, for all we call him the same, every bit of him is different, and every day he is becoming a new man, while the old man is ceasing to exist, as you can see from his hair, his flesh, his bones, his blood, and all the rest of his body And not only his body for the same thing happens to his soul , and neither his manners, nor his disposition, nor his thoughts, nor his desires, nor his pleasures, nor his sufferings, nor his fears are the same throughout his life, for some of them grow, while others disappear

And the application of this principle to human knowledge is even more remarkable , for not only do some of the things we know increase, while some of them are lost, so that even in our knowledge we are not always the same, but the principle applies as well to every single branch of knowledge When we say we are studying, we really mean that our knowledge is ebbing away , we forget, because our knowledge disappears , and we have to study so as to replace what we are losing, so that the state of our knowledge may seem, at any rate, to be the same as it was before

This is how every mortal creature perpetuates

SOCRATES

itself , it cannot, like the divine, be still the same throughout eternity , it can only leave behind new life to fill the vacancy that is left in its species by obsolescence This, my dear Socrates, is how the body and all else that is temporal partakes of the eternal , there is no other way And so it is no wonder that every creature prizes its own issue, since the whole creation is inspired by this love, this passion for immortality

Well, Diotima, I said, when she had done , that 's a most impressive argument I wonder if you 're right

Of course I am, she said with an air of authority that was almost professorial think of the ambitions of your fellow-men, and though at first they may strike you as upsetting my argument, you 'll see how right I am if you only bear in mind that men's great incentive is the love of glory, and that their one idea is

To win eternal mention in the deathless roll of fame

For the sake of fame they will dare greater dangers, even, than for their children , they are ready to spend their money like water and to wear their fingers to the bone , and, if it comes to that, to die Do you think, she went on, that Alcestis would have laid down her life to save Admetus, or that Achilles

SYMPOSIUM

would have died for the love he bore Patroclus, or that Codrus, the Athenian king, would have sacrificed himself for the seed of his royal consort, if they had not hoped to win 'the deathless name for valour,' which, in fact, posterity has granted them? No, Socrates, no Every one of us, no matter what he does, is longing for the endless fame, the incomparable glory that is theirs, and the nobler he is, the greater his ambition, because he is in love with the eternal

Well then, she went on, those whose procreancy is of the body turn to woman as the object of their love, and raise a family, in the blessed hope that by doing so they will keep their memory green, 'through time and through eternity' But those whose procreancy is of the spirit rather than of the flesh — and they are not unknown, Socrates — conceive and bear the things of the spirit And what are they? you ask Wisdom and all her sister virtues it is the office of every poet to beget them, and of every artist whom we may call creative

Now, by far the most important kind of wisdom, she went on, is that which governs the ordering of society, and which goes by the names of justice and moderation And if any man is so closely allied to

80

SOCRATES

the divine as to be teeming with these virtues even in his youth, and if, when he comes to manhood, his first ambition is to be begetting, he too, you may be sure, will go about in search of the loveliness — and never of the ugliness — on which he may beget. And hence his procreant nature is attracted by a comely body rather than an ill-favoured one, and if, besides, he happens on a soul which is at once beautiful, distinguished, and agreeable, he is charmed to find so welcome an alliance, it will be easy for him to talk of virtue to such a listener, and to discuss what human goodness is and how the virtuous should live — in short, to undertake the other's education.

And, as I believe, by constant association with so much beauty, and by thinking of his friend when he is present and when he is away, he will be delivered of the burden he has laboured under all these years, and what is more, he and his friend will help each other rear the issue of their friendship — and so the bond between them will be more binding, and their communion even more complete, than that which comes of bringing children up, because they have created something lovelier and less mortal than human seed.

And I ask you, who would not prefer such father-

SYMPOSIUM

hood to merely human propagation, if he stopped to think of Homer, and Hesiod, and all the greatest of our poets, who would not envy them their immortal progeny, their claim upon the admiration of posterity? Or think of Lycurgus, she went on, and what offspring he left behind him in his laws, which proved to be the saviours of Sparta and, perhaps, the whole of Hellas. Or think of the fame of Solon, the father of Athenian law, and think of all the other names that are remembered in Grecian cities and in lands beyond the sea for the noble deeds they did before the eyes of all the world, and for all the diverse virtues that they fathered. And think of all the shrines that have been dedicated to them in memory of their immortal issue, and tell me if you can of any one whose mortal children have brought him so much fame.

Well now, my dear Socrates, I have no doubt that even you might be initiated into these, the more elementary mysteries of Love, but I don't know whether you could apprehend the final revelation, for so far, you know, we are only at the bottom of the true scale of perfection. Never mind, she went on, I will do all I can to help you understand, and you must strain every nerve to follow what I'm saying.

SOCRATES

Well then, she began, the candidate for this initiation cannot, if his efforts are to be rewarded, begin too early to devote himself to the beauties of the body. First of all, if his preceptor instructs him as he should, he will fall in love with the beauty of one individual body, so that his passion may give life to noble discourse. Next he must consider how nearly related the beauty of any one body is to the beauty of any other, when he will see that if he is to devote himself to loveliness of form it will be absurd to deny that the beauty of each and every body is the same. Having reached this point, he must set himself to be the lover of every lovely body, and bring his passion for the one into due proportion by deeming it of little or of no importance.

Next he must grasp that the beauties of the body are as nothing to the beauties of the soul, so that wherever he meets with spiritual loveliness, even in the husk of an unlovely body, he will find it beautiful enough to fall in love with and to cherish and beautiful enough to quicken in his heart a longing for such discourse as tends towards the building of a noble nature. And from this he will be led to contemplate the beauty of laws and institutions, and when he discovers how nearly every

SYMPOSIUM

kind of beauty is akin to every other he will conclude that the beauty of the body is not, after all, of so great moment

And next, his attention should be diverted from institutions to the sciences, so that he may know the beauty of every kind of knowledge, and thus, by scanning beauty's wide horizon, he will be saved from a slavish and illiberal devotion to the individual loveliness of a single boy, a single man, or a single institution, and, turning his eyes towards the open sea of beauty, he will find in such contemplation the seed of the most fruitful discourse and the loftiest thought, and reap a golden harvest of philosophy, until, confirmed and strengthened, he will come upon one single form of knowledge, the knowledge of the beauty I am about to speak of And here, she said, you must follow me as closely as you can

Whoever has been initiated so far in the mysteries of Love and has viewed all these aspects of the beautiful in due succession, is at last drawing near the final revelation And now, Socrates, there bursts upon him that wondrous vision which is the very soul of the beauty he has toiled so long for It is an everlasting loveliness which neither comes nor goes, which neither flowers nor fades, for such beauty is

SOCRATES

the same on every hand, the same then as now, here as there, this way as that way, the same to every worshipper as it is to every other

Nor will his vision of the beautiful take the form of a face, or of hands, or of anything that is of the flesh, it will be neither words, nor knowledge, nor a something that exists in something else such as a living creature, or the earth, or the heavens, or anything that is, but subsisting of itself and by itself in an eternal oneness, while every lovely thing partakes of it in such sort that, however much the parts may wax and wane, it will be neither more nor less, but still the same inviolable whole

And so, when his prescribed devotion to boyish beauties has carried our candidate so far that the universal beauty dawns upon his inward sight, he is almost within reach of the final revelation. And this is the way, the only way, he must approach, or be led towards, the sanctuary of Love—starting from individual beauties, the quest for the universal beauty must find him ever mounting the heavenly ladder, stepping from rung to rung, that is, from one to two, and from two to every lovely body, from bodily beauty to the beauty of institutions, from institutions to learning, and from learning in general to the

SYMPOSIUM

special lore that pertains to nothing but the beautiful itself until at last he comes to know what beauty is

And if, my dear Socrates, Diotima went on, man's life is ever worth the living, it is when he has attained this vision of the very soul of beauty. And once you have seen it, you will never be seduced again by the charm of gold, of dress, of comely boys or lads just ripening to manhood, you will care nothing for the beauties that used to take your breath away and kindle such a longing in you, and many others like you, Socrates, to be always at the side of the beloved and feasting your eyes upon him, so that you would be content, if it were possible, to deny yourself the grosser necessities of meat and drink, so long as you were with him

But if it were given to man to gaze on beauty's very self—unsullied, unalloyed, and freed from the mortal taint that haunts the frailer loveliness of flesh and blood—if, I say, it were given to man to see the heavenly beauty face to face, would you call *his*, she asked me, an unenviable life, whose eyes had been opened to the vision, and who had gazed upon it in true contemplation until it had become his own for ever? And remember, she said, that it is when he looks upon beauty's visible presentment, and only

SOCRATES

then, that a man will be quickened with the true, and not the seeming, virtue—for it is virtue's self that quickens him, not virtue's semblance. And when he has brought forth and reared this perfect virtue, he shall be called the friend of god, and if ever it is given to man to put on immortality, it shall be given to him.

This, Phaedrus—this, gentlemen—was the doctrine of Diotima. I was convinced, and in that conviction I try to bring others to the same creed, and to convince them that, if we are to make this gift our own, Love will help our mortal nature more than all the world. And this is why I say that every man of us should worship the god of Love, and this is why I cultivate and worship all the elements of Love myself, and bid others do the same, and all my life I shall pay the power and the might of Love such homage as I can. So you may call this my eulogy of Love, Phaedrus, if you choose, if not, well, call it what you like.

Socrates took his seat amid applause from every one but Aristophanes, who was just going to take up the reference Socrates had made to his own theories, when suddenly there came a knocking at the outer door, followed by the notes of a flute and the sound of festive brawling in the street.

SYMPOSIUM

Go and see who it is, said Agathon to the servants. If it's one of our particular friends you can ask him in, but if not, you'd better say the party's over and there's nothing left to drink.

Well, it wasn't long before they could hear Alcibiades shouting in the courtyard, evidently very drunk, and demanding where Agathon was, because he must see Agathon at once. So the flute-girl and some of his other followers helped him stagger in, and there he stood in the doorway, with a mass of ribbons and an enormous wreath of ivy and violets sprouting on his head, and addressed the company.

Good evening, gentlemen, he said, I'm pretty well screwed already, so if you'd rather I didn't join the party, only say the word and I'll go away, as soon as I've hung this wreath on Agathon's head — which is what I really came for. I couldn't get along yesterday, so here I am to-night, with a bunch of ribbons on my head, all ready to take them off and put them on the head of the cleverest, the most attractive, and, I may say — well, any way, I'm going to crown him. And now I suppose you're laughing at me, just because I'm drunk. Go on, have your laugh out, don't mind me, I'm not so drunk that I don't know what I'm saying, and you can't deny it's true. Well, what

ALCIBIADES

do you say, gentlemen? Can I come in on that footing? And shall we all have a drink together, or shan't we?

At that they all cheered and told him to come in and make himself at home, while Agathon gave him a more formal invitation. And while his people helped him in he started pulling off the ribbons, so that he could transfer them to Agathon's head as soon as he was near enough. As it happened, the wreath slipped over his eyes and he didn't notice Socrates, although he sat down on the same couch, between him and Agathon—for Socrates had made room for him as soon as he came in. So down he sat, with a 'how d' you do' to Agathon, and began to tie the ribbons round his head.

Then Agathon said to the servants: Here, take off Alcibiades' shoes, so that we can all three make ourselves comfortable.

Yes, do, said Alcibiades, but just a minute, who's the third? And when he turned round and saw who it was, he leapt out of his seat and cried:

Well I'll be damned! You again, Socrates! So that's what you're up to, is it?—The same old game of lying in wait and popping out at me when I least expect you. Well, what's in the wind to-night?

SYMPOSIUM

And what do you mean by sitting here, and not by Aristophanes or one of these other humorists? Why make such a point of sitting next to the handsomest man in the room?

I say, Agathon, said Socrates, I'll have to ask you to protect me. You know, it's a dreadful thing to be in love with Alcibiades. It's been the same ever since I fell in love with him. I've only got to look at any one who's in the least attractive, or say a single word to them, and he flies into a fit of jealous fury, and calls me the most dreadful names, and behaves as if it was all he could do to keep his hands off me. So I hope you'll keep an eye on him, in case he tries to do me an injury. If you can get him to be friends, so much the better, but if you can't, and if he gets violent, you'll really have to protect me—for I shudder to think what lengths he might go to in his amorous transports.

Friends with you? said Alcibiades. Not on your life! I'll be getting my own back on you one of these days, but at the moment—Agathon, give me back some of those ribbons, will you? I want to crown Socrates' head as well—and a most extraordinary head it is. I don't want him to say I wreathed a garland for Agathon and none for him, when his

ALCIBIADES

words have been too much for all the world—and all his life too, Agathon, not just the other day, like yours

So saying, he crowned Socrates' head with a bunch of ribbons, and took his seat again

And now, gentlemen, he said, as he settled himself on the couch, can I be right in thinking that you're sober? I say, you know, we can't have this 'Come on, drink up' You promised to have a drink with me Now, I'll tell you, there's no one fit to take the chair at this meeting—until you've all got reasonably drunk—but me Come on, Agathon, tell them to bring out something that's worth drinking out of, no, never mind, he went on, here, you, just bring me that wine-cooler, will you? (which he saw would hold a couple of quarts or so) He made them fill it up, and took the first drink himself, after which he told them to fill it again for Socrates, and remarked to the others

But I shan't get any change out of him It doesn't matter how much you make him drink, it never makes him drunk

Meanwhile the servant had filled the wine-cooler up for Socrates and he had his drink, but here Eryximachus broke in

SYMPOSIUM

Is this the way to do things, Alcibiades? he asked
Is there to be no grace before we drink? Are we to
pour the wine down our throats like a lot of thirsty
savages?

Why, there's Eryximachus, said Alcibiades, the
noblest, soberest father's soberest, noblest son,
what?—Hallo, Eryximachus!

Hallo yourself, said Eryximachus Well, what do
you say?

What do you say? retorted Alcibiades, we have to
take your orders, you know What's the tag?—'A
good physician's more than all the world' So let's
have your prescription

Here it is, then, said Eryximachus Before you came
in we had arranged for each of us in turn, going
round from left to right, to make the best speech
he could in praise of Love Well, we've all had
our turn, so since you've had your drink without
having made a speech I think it's only right that
you should make it now And then, when you've
finished, you can tell Socrates to do whatever you
like and he can do the same to the next man on his
right, and so on all the way round

That's a very good idea, Eryximachus, said Alci-
biades, only you know it's hardly fair to ask a man

ALCIBIADES

that's more than half-cut already to compete with a lot of fellows who are practically sober And another thing, my dear Eryximachus, you mustn't believe a word of what Socrates has just been telling you Don't you see that it's just the other way round? It's him that can't keep his hands off me if he hears me say a good word for any one—god or man—but him

Oh, do be quiet, said Socrates

You can't deny it, retorted Alcibiades, god knows I've never been able to praise any one else in front of you

Now there's a good idea, said Eryximachus, why don't you give us a eulogy of Socrates?

Do you really mean that? asked Alcibiades Do you think I ought to, Eryximachus? Shall I go for him, and let you all hear me get my own back?

Here, I say, protested Socrates, what are you up to now? Do you want to make me look a fool with this eulogy, or what?

I'm simply going to tell the truth—you won't mind that, will you?

Oh, of course, said Socrates, you may tell the truth, in fact I'll go so far as to say you must

Then here goes, said Alcibiades, there's one thing,

SYMPOSIUM

though if I say a word that 's not the solemn truth I want you to stop me right away and tell me I 'm a liar — but I promise you it won't be my fault if I do On the other hand, you mustn't be surprised if I tell them about you just as it comes into my head, and jump from one thing to another , you can't expect any one that 's as drunk as I am to give a clear and systematic account of all your eccentricities

Well, gentlemen, I propose to begin my eulogy of Socrates with a simile I expect he 'll think I 'm making fun of him , but, as it happens, I 'm using this particular simile not because it 's funny, but because it 's true What he reminds me of more than anything is one of those little Silenuses that you see on the statuaries' stalls , you know the ones I mean — they 're modelled with pipes or flutes in their hands, and when you open them down the middle there are little figures of the gods inside And then again, he reminds me of Marsyas the satyr

Now I don't think even you, Socrates, will have the face to deny that you look like them , but the resemblance goes deeper than that, as I 'm going to show You 're quite as impudent as a satyr, aren't you? If you plead not guilty I can call witnesses to prove it And aren't you a piper as well? I should

ALCIBIADES

think you were, and a far more wonderful piper than Marsyas, who had only to put his flute to his lips to bewitch mankind. It can still be done, too, by any one who can play the tunes he used to play, why, there wasn't a note of Olympus' melodies that he hadn't learnt from Marsyas. And whoever plays them, from an absolute virtuoso to a twopenny-halfpenny flute-girl, the tunes will still have a magic power, and by virtue of their own divinity they will show which of us are fit subjects for divine initiation.

Now the only difference, Socrates, between you and Marsyas is that you can get just the same effect without any instrument at all, with nothing but a few simple words, not even poetry. Besides, when we listen to any one else talking, however eloquent he is, we don't really care a damn what he says, but when we listen to you, or to someone else repeating what you've said, even if he puts it ever so badly, and never mind whether the person who's listening is man, woman, or child, we're absolutely staggered and bewitched. And speaking for myself, gentlemen, if I wasn't afraid you'd tell me I was completely bottled, I'd swear on oath what an extraordinary effect his words have had on me—and still do, if it

SYMPOSIUM

comes to that For the moment I hear him speak I am smitten with a kind of sacred rage, worse than any Corybant, and my heart jumps into my mouth and the tears start into my eyes—oh, and not only me, but lots of other men

Yes, I've heard Pericles and all the other great orators, and very eloquent I thought they were, but they never affected me like that, they never turned my whole soul upside down and left me feeling as if I were the lowest of the low, but this latter-day Marsyas, here, has often left me in such a state of mind that I've felt I simply couldn't go on living the way I did—now, Socrates, you can't say that isn't true—and I'm convinced that if I were to listen to him at this very moment I'd feel just the same again I simply couldn't help it He makes me admit that while I'm spending my time on politics I am neglecting all the things that are crying for attention in myself So I just refuse to listen to him—as if he were one of those sirens, you know—and get out of earshot as quick as I can, for fear he keeps me sitting listening till I'm positively senile

And there's one thing I've never felt with anybody else—not the kind of thing you'd expect to find in me, either—and that is a sense of shame

ALCIBIADES

Socrates is the only man in the world that can make me feel ashamed. Because there's no getting away from it, I know I ought to do the things he tells me to, and yet the moment I'm out of his sight I don't care what I do to keep in with the mob. So I dash off like a runaway slave, and keep out of his way as long as I can, and then next time I meet him I remember all that I had to admit the time before, and naturally I feel ashamed. There are times when I'd honestly be glad to hear that he was dead, and yet I know that if he did die I'd be more upset than ever — so I ask you, what is a man to do?

Well, that's what this satyr does for me, and plenty like me, with his pipings, and now let me show you how apt my comparison was in other ways, and what extraordinary powers he has got. Take my word for it, there's not one of you that really knows him, but now I've started on him, I'll show him up. Notice, for instance, how Socrates is attracted by good-looking people, and how he hangs around them, positively gaping with admiration. Then again, he loves to appear utterly uninformed and ignorant — isn't that like Silenus? Of course it is. Don't you see that it's just his outer casing, like those little figures I was telling you about? But believe me,

SYMPOSIUM

friends and fellow-drunks, you've only got to open him up and you'll find him so full of temperance and sobriety that you'll hardly believe your eyes. Because, you know, he doesn't really care a row of pins about good looks — on the contrary, you can't think how much he looks down on them — or money, or any of the honours that most people care about. He doesn't care a curse for anything of that kind, or for any of us either — yes, I'm telling you — and he spends his whole life playing his little game of irony, and laughing up his sleeve at all the world.

I don't know whether anybody else has ever opened him up when he's been being serious, and seen the little images inside, but I saw them once, and they looked so god-like, so golden, so beautiful, and so utterly amazing, that there was nothing for it but to do exactly what he told me. I used to flatter myself that he was smitten with my youthful charms, and I thought this was an extraordinary piece of luck because I'd only got to be a bit accommodating and I'd hear everything he had to say — I tell you, I'd a pretty high opinion of my own attractions. Well, I thought it over, and then, instead of taking a servant with me as I always used to, I got rid of the man, and went to meet Socrates by myself. Remember,

ALCIBIADES

I'm bound to tell you the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so you'd all better listen very carefully, and Socrates must pull me up if I begin telling lies

Well, gentlemen, as I was saying, I used to go and meet him, and then, when we were by ourselves, I quite expected to hear some of those sweet nothings that lovers whisper to their darlings when they get them alone—and I liked the idea of that. But not a bit of it! He'd go on talking just the same as usual till it was time for him to go, and then he said good-bye and went

So then I suggested we should go along to the gymnasium and take a bit of exercise together, thinking that something was bound to happen there. And, would you believe it, we did our exercises together and wrestled with each other time and again, with not a soul in sight, and still I got no further. Well, I realized that there was nothing to be gained in that direction, but having put my hand to the plough I wasn't going to look back till I was absolutely certain how I stood, so I decided to make a frontal attack. I asked him to dinner, just as if I were the lover trying to seduce his beloved, instead of the other way round. It wasn't easy, either, to get him to accept, but in the end I managed to

SYMPOSIUM

Well, the first time he came he thought he ought to go as soon as we 'd finished dinner, and I was too shy to stop him. But next time, I contrived to keep him talking after dinner, and went on far into the night, and then, when he said he must be going, I told him it was much too late and pressed him to stay the night with me. So he turned in on the couch beside me — where he 'd sat at dinner — and the two of us had the room to ourselves.

So far I 've said nothing I need blush to repeat in any company, but you 'd never have heard what I 'm going to tell you now if there wasn't something in the proverb 'Drunkards and children tell the truth' — drunkards any way. Besides, having once embarked on my eulogy of Socrates it wouldn't be fair not to tell you about the arrogant way he treated me. People say, you know, that when a man 's been bitten by a snake he won't tell anybody what it feels like except a fellow-sufferer, because no one else would sympathize with him if the pain drove him into making a fool of himself — well, that 's just how I feel, only I 've been bitten by something much more poisonous than a snake, in fact, mine is the most painful kind of bite there is. I 've been bitten in the heart, or the mind, or whatever

ALCIBIADES

you like to call it, by Socrates' philosophy, which clings like an adder to any young and gifted mind it can get hold of, and does exactly what it likes with it. And looking round me, gentlemen, I see Phaedrus, and Agathon, and Eryximachus, and Pausanias, and Aristodemus, and Aristophanes, and all the rest of them, to say nothing of Socrates himself, and every one of you has had his taste of this philosophic frenzy, this sacred rage, so I don't mind telling you about it because I know you'll make allowances for me — both for the way I behaved with Socrates and for what I'm saying now. But the servants must put their fingers in their ears, and so must anybody else who's liable to be at all profane or beastly.

Well then, gentlemen, when the lights were out and the servants had all gone, I made up my mind to stop beating about the bush and tell him what I thought point-blank. So I nudged him and said

Are you asleep, Socrates?

No, I'm not, he said

Then do you know what I think? I asked

Well, what?

I think, I said, you're the only lover I've ever had who's been really worthy of me, only you're too

SYMPOSIUM

shy to talk about it Well, this is how I look at it I think it'd be just as absurd to refuse you this as anything else you wanted that belonged to me or any of my friends If there's one thing I'm keen on it's to make the best of myself, and I think you're more likely to help me there than anybody else, and I'm sure I'd find it harder to justify myself to men of sense for refusing to accommodate a friend of that sort than to defend myself to the vulgar if I had been kind to him

He heard me out, and then said with that ironic simplicity of his My dear Alcibiades, I've no doubt there's a lot in what you say, if you're right in thinking that I have some kind of power that would make a better man of you, because in that case you must find me so extraordinarily beautiful that your own attractions must be quite eclipsed And if you're trying to barter your own beauty for the beauty you have found in me, you're driving a very hard bargain, let me tell you you're trying to exchange the semblance of beauty for the thing itself—like Diomedes and Glaucus swopping bronze for gold But you know, my dear fellow, you really must be careful, suppose you're making a mistake, and I'm not worth anything at all The mind's eye begins to see

ALCIBIADES

clearly when the outer eyes grow dim — and I fancy yours are still pretty keen

To which I replied 'Well, I've told you exactly how I feel about it, and now it's for you to settle what's best for us both

That sounds reasonable enough, he said, we must think it over one of these days, and do whatever seems best for the two of us — about this and everything else

Well, by this time I felt that I had shot my bolt, and I'd a pretty shrewd idea that I'd registered a hit. So I got up, and, without giving him a chance to say a word, I wrapped my own cloak round him — for this was in the winter — and, creeping under his shabby old mantle, I took him in my arms and lay there all night with this god-like and extraordinary man — you can't deny that, either, Socrates. And after that he had the insolence, the infernal arrogance, to laugh at my youthful beauty and jeer at the one thing I was really proud of, gentlemen of the jury — I say 'jury' because that's what you're here for, to try the man Socrates on the charge of arrogance — and believe it, gentlemen, or believe it not, when I got up next morning I had no more slept with Socrates, within the meaning of the act, than if he'd been my father or an elder brother

SYMPOSIUM

You can guess what I felt like after that I was torn between my natural humiliation and my admiration for his manliness and self-control, for this was strength of mind such as I had never hoped to meet. And so I couldn't take offence and cut myself off from his society, but neither was there any way I could think of to attract him. I knew very well that I'd no more chance of getting at him with money than I had of getting at Ajax with a spear, and the one thing I'd made sure would catch him had already failed. So I was at my wits' end, and went about in a state of such utter subjection to the man as was never seen before.

It was after all this, you must understand, that we were both sent on active service to Potidaea, where we messed together. Well, to begin with, he stood the hardships of the campaign far better than I did, or any one else, for that matter. And if—and it's always liable to happen when there's fighting going on—we were cut off from our supplies, there was no one who put such a good face on it as him. But on the other hand, when there was plenty to eat he was the one man who really seemed to enjoy it, and though he didn't drink for choice, if we ever pressed him to he'd beat the lot of us, and, what's the

ALCIBIADES

most extraordinary thing of all, there 's not a man living that 's ever seen Socrates drunk And I dare say he 'll have a chance to show what he 's made of before this party 's over

Then again, the way he got through that winter was most impressive , and the winters over there are pretty shocking There was one time when the frost was harder than ever, and all the rest of us stayed inside, or if we did go out we wrapped ourselves up to the eyes and tied bits of felt and sheepskins over our shoes , but Socrates went out in the same old coat he 'd always worn, and made less fuss about walking on the ice in his bare feet than we did in our shoes So much so, that the men began to look at him with some suspicion and actually took his toughness as a personal insult to themselves

Well, so much for that , and now I must tell you about another thing 'Our valiant hero dared and did' in the course of the same campaign He started wrestling with some problem or other about sunrise one morning, and stood there lost in thought , and when the answer wouldn't come he still stood there thinking and refused to give it up Time went on, and by about midday the troops noticed what was happening, and naturally they were rather surprised

SYMPOSIUM

and began telling each other how Socrates had been standing there thinking ever since daybreak. And at last, towards nightfall, some of the Ionians brought out their bedding after supper — this was in the summer, of course — partly because it was cooler in the open air, and partly to see whether he was going to stay there all night. Well, there he stood till morning, and then at sunrise he said his prayers to the sun and went away.

And now I expect you'd like to hear what kind of a show he made when we went into action, and I certainly think you ought to know. They gave me a decoration after one engagement, and do you know, Socrates had saved my life, absolutely single-handed, I'd been wounded and he refused to leave me, and he got me out of it, too, armour and all. And as you know, Socrates, I went straight to the General Staff and told them you ought to have the decoration, and you can neither deny that nor blame me for doing it. But the authorities thought they'd rather give it to me, because of my family connections and so forth, and you were even keener than they were that I should have it instead of you.

And then, gentlemen, you should have seen him when we were in retreat from Delium. I happened

ALCIBIADES

to be in the cavalry, while he was serving with the line. Our people were falling back in great disorder and he was retreating with Laches when I happened to catch sight of them, I shouted to them not to be downhearted and promised to stand by them. And this time I'd a better chance of watching Socrates than I'd had at Potidaea — you see, being mounted, I wasn't quite so frightened. And I noticed for one thing how much cooler he was than Laches, and for another how — to borrow from a line of yours, Aristophanes — he was walking with the same 'lofty strut and sideways glance' that he goes about with here in Athens. His 'sideways glance' was just as unconcerned whether he was looking at his own friends or at the enemy, and you could see from half a mile away that if you tackled him you'd get as good as you gave — with the result that he and Laches both got clean away, for you're generally pretty safe if that's the way you look when you're in action, it's the man whose one idea it is to get away that the other fellow goes for.

Well, there's a lot more to be said about Socrates, all very peculiar and all very much to his credit. No doubt there's just as much to be said about any of his little ways, but personally I think the most

SYMPOSIUM

amazing thing about him is the fact that he is absolutely unique, there's no one like him, and I don't believe there ever was. You could point to some likeness to Achilles in Brasidas and the rest of them, you might compare Nestor and Antenor, and so on, with Pericles, there are plenty of such parallels in history, but you'll never find any one like Socrates, or any ideas like his ideas, in our own times or in the past — unless, of course, you take a leaf out of my book and compare him, not with human beings, but with Silenuses and satyrs, and the same with his ideas.

Which reminds me of a point I missed at the beginning, I should have explained how his arguments, too, were exactly like those Silenuses that open down the middle. Any one listening to Socrates for the first time would find his arguments simply laughable, he wraps them up in just the kind of expressions you'd expect of such an insufferable satyr. He talks about pack-asses and blacksmiths and shoemakers and tanners, and he always seems to be saying the same old thing in just the same old way, so that any one who wasn't used to his style and wasn't very quick on the uptake would naturally take it for the most utter nonsense. But if you open up his arguments, and really get into the skin of them, you'll

ALCIBIADES

find that they're the only arguments in the world that have any sense at all, and that nobody else's are so god-like, so rich in images of virtue, or so peculiarly, so entirely pertinent to those inquiries that help the seeker on his way to the goal of true nobility

And there, gentlemen, you have my eulogy of Socrates, with a few complaints thrown in about the unspeakable way he's treated me. I'm not the only one, either, there's Charmides, and Euthydemus, and ever so many more, he's made fools of them all, just as if he were the beloved, not the lover. Now, Agathon, I'm telling you this for your own good, so that you'll know what to look out for, and I hope you'll learn from our misfortunes, and not wait for your own to bring it home to you, like the poor fool in the adage

As Alcibiades took his seat there was a good deal of laughter at his frankness, especially as he seemed to be still in love with Socrates, but the latter said:

I don't believe you're as drunk as you make out, Alcibiades, or you'd never have given the argument such a subtle twist and obscured the real issue, what you were really after—though you only slipped it in casually towards the end—was to make trouble

SYMPOSIUM

between me and Agathon, so that I as your lover, and he as your beloved, should both belong to you and nobody else. But you can't humbug me, I can see what you're getting at with all this satyr and Silenus business. I only hope, Agathon, my dear, that he won't succeed, and I hope you'll be very careful not to let anybody come between us.

I'm inclined to think you're right, Socrates, said Agathon, remember how he sat down in the middle so as to keep us apart. But I'll come round and sit next to you, so that won't help him very much.

Yes, do, said Socrates, come round the other side.

Oh, god! cried Alcibiades, look what I have to put up with! He's determined to drive me off the field. All the same, Socrates, I think you might let Agathon sit in the middle.

Oh, no, said Socrates, that would never do. Now you've finished singing my praises, I've got to do the same by the next man on my right, so you see, if he sat next to you, he'd have to start eulogizing me before he'd had my eulogy of him. So be a good chap and let the boy alone, you mustn't grudge him the praise I'm going to give him, because I'm dying to start my eulogy.

Aha! cried Agathon, you don't catch me staying

APOLLODORUS

here much longer, Alcibiades, I shall certainly change places if it means a tribute from Socrates

Oh, it's always the same, said Alcibiades bitterly, no one else gets a look-in with the beauties when Socrates is there. Look how easily he trumped up an excuse for Agathon to sit beside him

And then, all of a sudden, just as Agathon was getting up to go and sit by Socrates, a whole crowd of revellers came to the door, and finding it open, as someone was just going out, they marched straight in and joined the party. No sooner had they sat down than the whole place was in an uproar, decency and order went by the board, and everybody had to drink the most enormous quantities of wine. By this time Eryximachus and Phaedrus and some of the others were beginning to leave, so Aristodemus told me, while he himself fell off to sleep

He slept on for some time, for this was in the winter and the nights were long, and when at last he woke it was near daybreak and the cocks were crowing. He noticed that all the others had either gone home or fallen asleep, except Agathon and Aristophanes and Socrates, who were still awake and drinking out of an enormous bowl which they

SYMPOSIUM

kept passing round from left to right Socrates was arguing with the others , not that Aristodemus could remember very much of what he said, for, besides having missed the beginning, he was still more than half-asleep , but the gist of it was that Socrates was forcing them to admit that the same man might be capable of writing both comedy and tragedy — that the tragic poet might be a comedian as well

But as he clinched the argument, which the other two were scarcely in a state to follow, they began to nod and first Aristophanes fell off to sleep and then Agathon, as day was breaking Whereupon Socrates tucked them up comfortably and went away, followed, of course, by Aristodemus and after calling at the Lyceum for a bath, he spent the rest of the day as usual , and then, towards evening, made his way home to rest

